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THE EPISTLES OF PETER, JOHN, AND JUDE

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CONTENTS

Part I—The Epistles of Peter	5
I. Words of Comfort for Tried Ones	7
II. He Is Precious	20
III. Our High Calling in Christ	33
IV. Social and Civil Duties of the Christian Life	43
V. Sanctification	54
VI. Ministers of Christ	68
VII. The Coming of the Day of God	78
 Part II—The Epistles of John	 91
I. The Life	93
II. The Walk	102
III. The Father	116
IV. The Anointing	126
V. The Love of God	136
VI. The Confidence	146
VII. The Conflict	156
VIII. The Victory	165
IX. The Ministry of Letter Writing	173
 Part III—The Epistle of Jude	 183

Part I—THE EPISTLES OF PETER

I

WORDS OF COMFORT FOR TRIED ONES

"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1: 6, 7).

PETER was to be the special target of Satan's assaults just because Christ had chosen him for so high a ministry. But even his very trials were his best preparation for that ministry, and the Master here intimates that when through the discipline of temptation he shall have himself become transformed, it will be his special calling to comfort and confirm his tried and tempted brethren.

How marvelously has he been transformed since that dark night of the betrayal! One has only to read his tender and lovely messages in his two epistles to see how truly he had taken up his Master's cross, and how deeply he had learned the lesson of his humiliating fall. One has only to read further his messages of consolation to the tried and tempted to see how faithfully he has fulfilled his commission, "Strengthen thy brethren." The First Epistle of Peter is the best commentary on this text, and we can find no more comforting and helpful message for those who are passing through fiery trials than these letters of hope and comfort.

Peter is indeed the apostle of hope, as Paul is the

8 The Epistles of Peter, John, and Jude

apostle of faith, and John the messenger of love. The keynote of his first epistle is this word, trial, which reappears in every chapter and forms the pivot of almost all his messages of comfort and encouragement. We have but to read the following passages to find that this one thought is sustained through the entire epistle: "Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:6, 7). "For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1 Peter 2:19-21). "But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: Having a good conscience; that, whereas, they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing" (2 Peter 3:14-17). "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are

partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf" (1 Peter 4:12-16). "Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you" (1 Peter 5:9, 10).

Let us gather out of these passages Peter's special messages of consolation to the tried and troubled.

1. He begins by giving them the vision of hope and heaven before he says a single word about trial. He tells them of the inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, unfading, and reserved in heaven for them, before he draws the dark picture of persecution and suffering. When the sea captain sees the sailor boy growing white as he climbs the mast, he always shouts to him, "Look up!" and his nerves grow cool and his fears are assuaged. So the Lord on that dark night, when He was bidding His disciples not to let their hearts be troubled, told them of the Father's house of many mansions and the place prepared. Let us begin every trial with the thought of heaven and the hope of His coming and the joy set before us, and

we, too, shall be enabled to endure the cross, despising the shame, and often sing:

“When I can read my title clear
To mansions in the skies,
I'll bid farewell to every fear,
And wipe my weeping eyes.

“Let cares like a wild deluge come,
And storms of sorrow fall,
May I but safely reach my home,
My God, my heaven, my all.”

2. It is only for “a season.” Compared with that long and happy eternity, the longest trial is short indeed. Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Remember, suffering child of God, it will be over soon, and faith and hope can hear the whisper in an undertone, “It is but a little while.”

3. There is a “need be” for every trial. It does not come by chance. There is a divine purpose in it all. It is necessary for your spiritual education, and some day you will thank God that He loved you well enough to let you learn to “endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”

“Ye are in heaviness,” he says, “through manifold temptations,” and there is a “need be” even for this. How true it is that trouble never comes alone! When the adversary gets your body under, he loves to strike your soul and inject the fiery darts of discouragement and doubt. And you must not wonder if sometimes the trial strikes into the very depths of your being, and you even lose your joy

and spring, and fall into heaviness of spirit. This is the hardest of all temptations. "A wounded spirit who can bear?" We are so apt to conclude at such a time that the Holy Spirit has left us or we should not be so depressed. Beloved, this is not so. There was a time when the Master "began to be sorrowful and very heavy." There was a time when Paul had to say, "We had no rest in our spirit; without were fightings, within were fears." Do not wonder, therefore, if your heart may sink sometimes in deep and long depression. There may be a "need be" even for this. Perhaps the Lord is crucifying you to your natural exuberance of spirit and teaching you to take your joy by faith from the Holy Ghost, and so find an everlasting joy which the world can neither give nor take away.

4. Your trial is "more precious than gold which perisheth, though it be tried with fire." That is to say, the trial, not the faith, is precious. We really possess nothing but that which has become part of our being. Outward conditions and circumstances will all pass away, but the experience that God burns into us will be part of our life for evermore. Therefore trial is precious because it makes Christ real to us and fixes the spiritual character which the Holy Ghost imparts. Remember, suffering one, that your trial is very precious to Him. He is watching it with anxious and ceaseless solicitude. He will not suffer it to go too far or last too long, but the very moment that the end has been accomplished, He will withdraw the vessel from the flames and give you rest from your sorrow.

5. It will redound to "praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." "Praise," for we shall

thank Him for His faithful love in not excusing us from the hardest and highest classes in the school of experience. "Honor," for it will entitle us to rank in the school among the veterans and to wear our battle scars as marks of highest honor amid the overcomers yonder. And "glory," for in no other way can we earn the rewards of heaven and the glory which is superadded to the grace except by sacrifice and suffering. Salvation is a gift of grace, all grace, and we have nothing to pay or do to win it. But glory is gained by giving up our will, by taking up the cross, by letting go our rights, by standing in the hard place now, as we share the sufferings of Christ, and "when his glory shall be revealed we shall be glad also with exceeding joy."

6. "This is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully." Literally this means God will say, "I thank you." This passage is addressed especially to the slaves at Rome, not ordinary servants, but actually bondslaves, the property of their masters, and compelled to do and endure the most trying things at their will. The apostle comforts them in their trial by telling them that some day God Himself will stoop from the throne to thank them before the universe for their patient and faithful sufferings for His sake. What a proud day that was for Admiral Dewey when the nation thanked him for his great exploit! What a supreme honor it was when Lord Roberts knelt at the feet of his queen to receive her acknowledgments for his victorious campaign! But, oh, what a day it will be when some lowly servant maid shall be taken from the kitchen and seated by the side of the King of glory, while He shall tell the

world how she suffered for His sake, and perhaps accomplished a higher ministry in her lowly place than the tongue of eloquence or the gifts of fortune of those who had much higher opportunities.

7. Be comforted by the consciousness that you are suffering innocently. "If, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." And yet some people are always going about telling how wrongfully they have been accused, how cruelly they have been misrepresented, how unjustly they have suffered. One would think that they were ashamed of that which the apostle considers the highest glory. The fact that you are innocent ought to take all the sting out of your trial and make you rejoice that you are counted worthy to be silent in the hour of misrepresentation, to let God vindicate you, and to "commit the keeping of our souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."

8. Remember that it is your business to suffer for Christ "for even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." What would you think of a soldier complaining because he had been fired at? It is a soldier's business to be fired at. And so it is your calling to suffer for Jesus' sake. If you do not like it you should retire from the business of being a Christian. But if you intend to be true to your calling, you must not shrink from trial for Jesus' sake, nor be as eager to get out of the trial as to glorify Him in it. The apostles recognized their persecutions and summonses before courts and magistrates as just so many pulpits to preach the Gospel and

they were not half as anxious to escape from their enemies as to have every situation turn to them for a testimony.

Your humble station, your menial task may afford the very opportunity necessary for some special service which another could not do. An ancient legend tells us that one day a lad in Galilee was about to go out with his morning basket of buns and fish to sell for their scanty living. "Mother," he cried, "is the bread all ready?" And the mother answered impatiently, "Oh, I am so tired of this everlasting drudgery. Will it never end?" But at last the little basket was filled, and the lad had sold all but five of the loaves and two of the fishes, and just then, boylike, he began to follow the crowd that was streaming over the hills. Before he realized how far he had gone, he was out in the wilderness, close up to the great Teacher and one of His disciples whom he had come to know, good Andrew, whom he had doubtless met on his village rounds. They were looking for bread for that great multitude of perhaps twenty thousand people, counting the women and children, and they had nothing but this lad's little basket. But as he told his wondering mother how the Prophet had taken his loaves and fishes and blessed them, and given them out to the multitude in pieces until every one had eaten enough, and there were still left twelve baskets, she listened with strange interest, and her tears fell fast, and she said, "Did He really take my loaves and use them? Then never again will I be weary or discouraged of baking bread, so long as I know that I am making it for Him." Some day, dear one, you shall find that it was indeed for Him, and that instead of being a servant for some earthly

and stingy taskmaster, you were ministering to Jesus and winning a crown of glory that shall never fade away.

9. Trial affords us a fine opportunity to witness for Christ by our example. Nothing speaks for Him so emphatically as a patient, gentle spirit bearing in silent meekness the abuse and wrong which others may heap upon us, and often we shall find that when we are right with people God makes them right with us.

A good woman in Stockholm had started a nursery for friendless and helpless children, but one of the little inmates was a constant trial to her. His body was diseased, his temper was intolerable. He seemed to have no gratitude or appreciation for any kindness shown him, but was always cross and discontented, while in addition his face was covered with sores, his form distorted and repulsive, and everything about him utterly forbidding. At last one day she had been telling the Lord that her burden was too hard to bear. Just then came to her a vision of her Lord, and she seemed to see Him bending over her with a look of great love and saying to her, "My dear child, I have loved and borne with you for more than half a century. Cannot you for My sake love and bear with this wretched child?" Her soul was thrilled with such a sense of His love that the very joy awoke her, and there before her eyes was the miserable child. But her heart was so filled with the Saviour's love that she seemed to love everything else for His sake, and bending down she gently kissed the child. All at once her own spirit seemed to have passed into him, and the little one looked up with a smile that she had never seen before and threw his arms around her neck and

began to caress her. From that time the disposition of the child was changed. The Saviour's love had touched her heart and she had just passed it on to the little heart to whom she was in the place of God, and she had her reward in the beautiful transformation she saw from that time in her little charge. From that day forward the little one was completely changed, and became gentle, affectionate and even beautiful, and that which had been to her an insupportable burden became an unceasing joy. So our gentleness and sweetness will speak to others and awaken in them the response which our words can never call forth; while on the other hand our petulance and temper will often mar in a single moment the efforts of our lips and lives for many years to bring some soul to Christ.

“So let our lips and lives express
The holy Gospel we profess.”

10. It will comfort and sustain us in trial to remember that we are partakers of the sufferings of Christ. Remember when any cross confronts you that it is His cross, that it is not yours, but His, and that it is just part of the load that He has left behind for you to bear for Him. The question is, Will you or He carry it? The apostle speaks of “filling up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ for his body, the Church.” The Lord Jesus has left behind something for us to bear, something of His sufferings. Will we take it up and carry it for Him, or shall we leave Him to bear the burden alone? Has He not borne enough already, and shall we not consider it a privilege and a joy to be partakers with Him of the burden

that some day is to bring so great a blessing and reward? Doubtless you have heard the ancient legend which has been immortalized in the Polish romance, *Quo Vadis*. It tells us that when the fearful persecution of Nero arose against the Christians at Rome, to which this epistle undoubtedly refers when it speaks of the fiery trial, or more literally, "The trial of burning which is to try you," when Christians were soaked in oil, set on fire, and tied to stakes in the Roman squares to light the streets by night—that Peter himself, with a little band of fugitive Christians, was leaving Rome late one night, when he met his Master with a sorrowful face walking back to the city and about to enter the gate through which he had just escaped. "Whither goest Thou?" he asked. And the Lord answered, "I am going to Rome to be crucified again because My servant Peter has fled from the cross." And Peter fell at his Master's feet and cried, "Nay, Lord, I will go back again, and gladly die for Thee." And so with head downward he let them nail him to the cross, counting it too high a privilege even to suffer with as much honor as his dying Lord.

Beloved, who shall bear the cross that meets you in your life? Your Lord or you? God help you to rejoice in your sufferings for Him and fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ for His body, the Church.

11. "The spirit of glory and of God will rest upon you" in the hour of trial. When Israel of old came through the depths of the sea then the cloud moved and came through the camp, baptizing them in its folds and making them to realize that God comes nearest to the heart, and

often fills it with wonder and praise, when the "peace of God which passeth all understanding guards our heart and mind." We look back upon such seasons as the sunlit memories of life and often say of them, "Thou hast known my soul in adversities." Let us claim the promise and "glory in tribulation also," and when God puts us most severely to the test let us put Him most fully to the test also, and we shall find that "as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ."

12. Trial borne for Christ will bring us a great reward, for "if we are partakers of Christ's sufferings; . . . when his glory shall be revealed, [we] may be glad also with exceeding joy." Man loves to keep the memorials of heroic deeds, but, oh, how much more will God treasure up on high the monuments of His people's victories! And some day we shall find our tears transformed to jewels in the crown that we shall lay at Jesus' feet.

In one of the anniversary meetings of the British societies, a wealthy and distinguished layman told this incident in the life of his mother and father, both widely known throughout the Christian world for their splendid gifts to the cause of Christ. He said that when his father came to London, he was a poor lad with his fortune yet to be made. But in passing a certain house one morning, he was attracted by a girl who was washing the stone steps, and with a very bright, happy face, was singing snatches of religious hymns. From morning to morning the lad continued to come that way and often saw the fair vision of this happy face. One day he made bold to ask her to direct him to some Christian church as he was

a stranger in the city. Naturally she directed him to her own, and they gradually got better acquainted until that friendship ripened into love and marriage. But he never forgot the vision of his first acquaintance with her and the beautiful spectacle of that humble girl so happy in her life of toil. When his great fortune was made and the time came to build a splendid mansion, he bought the house where she used to work as a servant, and took the stone steps bodily from its front and put them in his new mansion, that he might have a permanent memorial of the beautiful young life that had won him by its patient dignity and sweetness. And so we shall doubtless find yonder in our heavenly home, such memorials of sacrifice and service; perhaps some old broom or washtub preserved, as the relics of the saints are kept today on earth, but bearing some blessed memorial of the Master's grace and the disciple's victory.

13. Remember in your darkest hour of trial that you are not alone, for He tells you that "the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."

Finally, the issue of your trials. "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." So, beloved, may we let Him stablish, strengthen, and settle us, and thus bring us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, to whom be glory both now and forever, Amen.

II

HE IS PRECIOUS

"Unto you therefore which believe he is precious" (1 Peter 2:7).

THE last question the Master asked His disciple, Peter, was, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" And his beautiful letters leave us in no doubt as to the answer. It is summed up in our emphatic text, "He is precious."

But Peter tells us a great deal about Christ, and he tells it very completely. His picture of the Master leaves no lineament out, and it dwells most fully on the cruel thorns that marred His face, and the sufferings which Peter himself had once refused to hear about.

I. CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS

This is his first picture of the Lord. There was a time when Christ began to say unto His disciples that the Son of man must suffer many things and be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles, who should falsely condemn and crucify Him, and on the third day He should rise again from the dead. But Peter took Him and began to rebuke Him, and said, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." Then Jesus turned and with terrible rebuke, He answered Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." Peter never forgot that rebuke, and he makes full amends for his unitarianism in this epistle. Six times he tells us about the suffering Christ.

1. He goes so far with the Unitarian as to hold up the suffering Master as our example that "ye should follow his steps; who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." This is all very beautiful and very true. But this is only the beginning. Peter goes much farther than this and soon parts company with his Unitarian friends, for

2. He goes on to tell us of Christ as our Sacrifice and Substitute on the cross. "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness" (1 Peter 2:24). Here there is no mistake about the substitutionary character of the Saviour's sufferings. He bare our sins on the tree. Thank God, He left them there, and so died to them that we with Him are also dead to sin and alive unto righteousness.

3. He makes all this plainer in another passage in the first chapter, where he describes the suffering One as our Redeemer. "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers. But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God" (1 Peter 1:18-21). We hear some speak with scorn of the theology of the shambles, and that it degrades the Lord Jesus to represent Him under the gross imagery of sacrificial death. But here Peter uses no roundabout phrases,

but tells us straight and plainly that Jesus suffered for us as a lamb on the altar of sacrifice. We see the precious blood. We see the dying Lamb. We see the ransom paid for the guilty, and we hear again, "the sweetest note in seraph song" and "sweetest word on mortal tongue"—REDEEMED. Not only so, but he tells us that redemption is God's most ancient thought, and that Christ was foreordained before the foundation of the world to suffer and die for the sins of men, so that the cross is really the center of God's plan, and the final cause of the whole work of creation. It is not merely an afterthought or a remedy suddenly conceived to meet an emergency, but Christ is "the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world," and His redeeming work will forever be the supreme glory of the universe.

"Ye were . . . redeemed," Peter says, ". . . from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers." So that redemption is much more than deliverance from a future hell. It is deliverance from this present evil world, deliverance from our life of sin and folly, deliverance from the spirit and maxims of the world, deliverance from the traditions we have inherited from our fathers. Beloved, have we been redeemed from these things? And have we claimed our freedom?

4. Christ as our atonement is still more definitely presented in 1 Peter 3:18, "For Christ also hath once suffered [rather, once for all suffered] for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." This passage is an excellent statement of the doctrine of the atonement. It asserts the once-for-all-ness of that great transaction, the finished work of Christ as a complete and

eternal settlement of the question of sin. This passage has special reference to the relation of Christ's sufferings to the justice and law of God. "Christ . . . once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." There were questions on God's side that must be answered, and problems that must be solved, arising out of His inflexible justice and demanding a settlement of the debt of sin. Had God simply blotted out the record of man's sin without an adequate satisfaction, the majesty of His law and His righteousness would have been compromised. His word would have been set at nought and His authority annulled throughout the universe. It was necessary that He should be a just God as well as a Saviour. The debt could not be cancelled. It must be paid and receipted in full. And this is just what the atonement of Christ has provided, putting the believer in the same position as if he had never sinned, and not only forgiving his fault, but judging him and pronouncing him righteous through the righteousness of Christ.

Then on the side of the sinner there were difficulties to be adjusted before He could bring us to God. The distrust and dread of the guilty soul must be removed and a spirit of confidence awakened. We must be reconciled to God. And, therefore, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." By the exhibition of the Father's love and the place of salvation into which He brings us through His cross, the sinner is brought nigh to God by the blood of Christ, and thus atonement, that is literally at-one-ment, is accomplished, and we are brought to God in confidence and love.

5. Christ's sufferings have accomplished our healing,

“by whose stripes ye were healed” (1 Peter 2:24). Our body as well as our soul is included in this great redemption. This is one of our redemption rights. Let us not suffer it to be lost by our default. Literally this means, “by His stripes.” His whole body was one dreadful laceration, and in that deadly stripe all our physical liabilities on account of sin were met. Well may it fill us with shame to think what our redemption cost, and with jealous love to make sure that such a costly boon shall not be lost.

6. Christ’s death is the pattern of our death as well as the price of our life. “Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin” (1 Peter 4:1). That is to say, as Christ died to sin, so let us die with Him and thus arm ourselves against sin by entering into the fact of His death and resurrection. While in one sense

“He died for us that we might live,”

in another sense it is even more true that

“He died for us that we might die.”

The deepest experience of the Apostle Paul was this: “I have been crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live.” There is an absurd story told of an official on one of the Irish railroads whose superior had just died, and who, in sending by wire the announcement of his master’s death, did not feel at liberty to send it in his own name, but used the usual form signed by the principal, and running like this: “I regret to have to inform you that I died this

morning at ten o'clock of pneumonia, W. J. Brown, Mgr., per J. Jones." There is a real truth behind the Irish bull. The greatest crisis in our spiritual life is when we are able to say with the apostle, "I died today, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." That is the only way to get victory over sin. So long as we identify ourselves with our past self we are under the power of our old life. It is when we bury it and take the position that we are no longer the person that sinned, but that we have died with Christ and risen again in Him, and are now living His life, we have power over sin, and the wretched man that we dragged about with us is consigned to an eternal grave, and the new life springs into liberty and power.

Such then is Peter's view of the sufferings of Christ, and the vision from which he once recoiled with intense antagonism is now to him so blessed that he speaks of it as one "into which the angels desire to look," and he condenses into a single phrase his intense appreciation of the value and the glory of the cross when he tells us not only of the precious Christ, but "the precious blood of Christ."

II. CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

He next bears testimony to the power of His resurrection.

1. It is the source of our life. He "hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3). Our regeneration comes to us through the fellowship of His resurrection. We are born again through the fellowship of His resurrection life. We are born again through that life.

2. Christ's resurrection is the ground of our faith and hope. "God . . . raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God" (1 Peter 1:21). Christ's resurrection is the foundation of our faith. For "if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain . . . ye are yet in your sins." He went into the prison of the grave a debtor for your sins. Had He not come out, it would mean that the debt is still unpaid. But when we see Him rise in glory and ascend to the Father's right hand, we know that the ransom has been accepted, the debt is paid, and our sins are gone. Therefore, He "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

His resurrection is also the foundation of our hope. "For if Christ be not raised. . . . Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." The resurrection of Christ is the pledge of our resurrection and our future glory. Therefore our hope as well as faith rests upon His open grave.

3. The resurrection of Christ is set forth in Christian baptism. "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21). That is to say, baptism does not signify the putting away of our uncleanness by washing, but by death and resurrection. We are so vile that no water can wash away the stain. The only thing to do with us is to bury us and raise up a new life through Christ's resurrection. This is implied in the figure of baptism. "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism unto death: that like as Christ

was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

Now Peter tells us here that the ark and the deluge were also typical of the same spiritual truth and experience. The expression is used in the twentieth verse that "eight souls were saved by water." It is not *from* water they were saved, but *by* water. The deluge saved Noah and his family from the sin that was engulfing the world, and through the ark his family was carried as by a seeming death and resurrection into the new world, where the race began again its career. So in baptism we pass through a seeming death and resurrection with Christ into a new life. The resurrection, therefore, is the brightest and most uplifting object of the believer's faith. While it is true that we die with Christ once, it is more gloriously true that we live with Him forevermore. Have we entered into the fellowship of His sufferings and the power of His resurrection?

III. THE POSTHUMOUS MINISTRY OF CHRIST

This is His ministry in the interval between His death and resurrection. This is a part of His work of which Peter is almost the exclusive witness. It is true the Apostle Paul alludes to it when he speaks of Him who "also descended first into the lower parts of the earth." Peter, however, tells us definitely that during the interval after His death He was quickened in the spirit, and in this state "he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient . . . in the days of Noah" (1 Peter 3:19, 20). There is little room to question the literal reference of this passage to the disem-

28 The Epistles of Peter, John, and Jude

bodied spirits of those who had lived in the days of Noah, and who were now in prison in the realm of the dead, the region called Hades in the Scriptures. That Christ visited this region is certain, and that He gave some message there is also plain. That it was a message of salvation to these imprisoned spirits there is no reason to believe, and there is no hint of it anywhere in the Scriptures. The word translated "preached" here is not the word usually employed for the preaching of the Gospel, but it literally means to herald, to give a proclamation. It is not difficult for us to surmise what He might have proclaimed in the realms of the dead. These souls had heard the Gospel for a hundred and twenty years in the days of Noah, and rejected it with scorn while God's Spirit strove with men. Now they are informed by the authority of the Son of God that the message which they rejected and ridiculed is true, and has been at last fulfilled, and the testimony of Noah is vindicated. At the same time how natural it would be for Him to proclaim to the other spirits in Hades that had died in faith and waited for His coming, that at last the great redemption was complete, that sin was cancelled, that death was conquered, and that He was about to open their prison doors and lead their captivity captive, and take them up with Him to heaven, to which He was about to ascend and open its portals henceforth to all believers. When He did ascend to heaven, we know He took with Him these captive spirits; and since that time the souls of believers, like Stephen, no longer pass into Hades to wait for their reward, but pass immediately into glory and are with Jesus Christ Himself in heaven, awaiting the resurrec-

tion of their bodies and their full inheritance and reward at His second coming.

IV. THE EXALTATION AND GLORIOUS SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST

1. His ascension and exaltation. "Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him" (1 Peter 3:22). This is the picture of His present high priestly and kingly work. There He sits in the place of supreme authority and power; Head over all things for His body, the Church, every angel at His bidding, every authority and law in the universe subject to His command or suspension, and every power available for the help of His redeemed people.

2. His coming again in glory. It is only necessary to quote the apostle's repeated references to this blessed hope. In 1 Peter 1:7, He tells us that our trial "might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." In chapter 4:13, we are told that "when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy"; and in 1 Peter 5:4, the faithful minister of Christ is reminded that "when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." Thus we see that the blessed hope of the Lord's return was very clear to Peter's mind, and very dear to his affection and his hope.

V. HIS RELATION TO THE CHURCH AS THE CHIEF CORNER STONE

"To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious. . . .

Behold, I lay in Sion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded" (1 Peter 2:4, 6). It is recorded as a Jewish legend that when the temple of Solomon was being reared with noiseless hands, each prepared stone and timber being simply adjusted to its place, one stone of singular form was laid aside as unsuited to any place that they had found for it. After a while it became covered up with refuse and was known as the stone which the builders rejected. But later a niche was found on the principal corner that no stone would fit, and then they looked up this rejected stone and found it was the chief cornerstone, and the one designed to fill this place and connect together the two walls, and thus make the building one. And so it came to be a proverb among the Jews that the stone which the builders rejected is made the head of the corner. Our Lord applied the proverb to Himself. And well He might. For it is in Him that all the parts of the building are united and compacted and grow together into an holy temple in the Lord. It is as we are united to Him that we are attached to each other, and all Christian unity depends upon oneness with the Lord. The nearer we grow to the Master's heart, the closer will we stand heart to heart in unison with each other. The secret of Christian union is not platforms, creeds, or even coöperative work, but it is one life, one heart, one spirit, in the fellowship and love of Jesus Christ.

VI. HIS RELATION TO THE INDIVIDUAL BELIEVER

"Unto you therefore which believe he is precious" (1 Peter 2:7). Literally this means as in the revised

version, "Unto you which believe he is the preciousness." He is called in the previous passage the precious stone of God's election. Now His preciousness passes over to you who believe. His merits are imparted to you, and His rights and glories become yours also. And thus "ye also, as lively [living] stones" are built up into Him and become as precious as He. Just as when the iron touches the magnet it becomes partaker of its magnetism and in turn a magnet, too, so the soul that is united to Christ partakes with Him of His divine purity and power, and is no longer earthly and common, but precious and divine. Peter is undoubtedly referring to the interview between him and his Master when he was first called. "Thou art Simon the son of Jona," the Lord had said. That is, you are but a piece of earthly clay. But "thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone." That is, your nature shall be transformed by contact with Me, until you shall become part of the living Rock, which the word Peter signifies. And so we find in the vision of the New Jerusalem that Peter and the apostles of the Lamb are there as precious stones laid first on the corner Stone, Jesus Christ, and reflecting all His transcendent glory. This, then, is the meaning of the preciousness of Christ. It is not only that He is dear to us, for that is ineffably true, but rather that we are dear to God even as He, that we share His preciousness, shine in His beauty, stand in His merits, and shall be partakers of His glory.

"All that He has shall be mine,
All that He is I shall be;
Robed in His glory divine,
I shall be even as He."

VII. HIS RELATION TO THE UNBELIEVER

“And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed” (1 Peter 2:8). If you reject this precious Saviour, if you miss this supreme opportunity, if you pervert the grace of God and make it only an occasion for your idle criticism, Christ will become to you as great a curse as He might have been a blessing. “Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken,” but, oh, there is something immeasurably worse, “On whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.”

III

OUR HIGH CALLING IN CHRIST

"I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims" (1 Peter 2:11).

PETER has told us about Christ. Now, what has he to tell us about ourselves? His first epistle contains a number of significant titles and attributes of the believer.

1. Strangers. "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered," etc. (1 Peter 1:1). This applies primarily to the Jews, as Peter was especially the apostle of the dispersion. How truly they may be called "strangers scattered abroad," a land without a people, a people without a land!

"Tribes of the wandering foot and weary breast,
Where shall you fly away and be at rest?
The wood dove hath her nest, the fox his cave,
Mankind his country, Israel but the grave."

But the term also applies to the Christian of Gentile as well as of Jewish blood. This is not our home. We are strangers here, or should be.

2. Elect. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," (1 Peter 1:2). Though strangers and aliens, for whom the world has no more place than for their Master, they are of great value to God, and they have been chosen and selected out of the great mass of the human family for the work of grace and the destiny of glory. But their elec-

tion is not arbitrary and apart from their personal character and conduct. No man can plant his feet in dogmatic willfulness on the decrees of God and say, "If I am elected, I will be saved, whatever I do," for the Lord Jesus has given us the first test of our election in these simple words, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me," and if we have not come to Christ, it is as idle to talk about our election, as for a man to expect a civic election until he has first become a candidate. Then the apostle Peter has told us here that our election is through sanctification and to obedience. If, therefore, we are not receiving the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit and walking in obedience to Christ, we have no right to claim our election. The last phrase, "sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," has a special application to the deeper work of our sanctification. The shed blood was the special symbol of Christ's atonement for our guilt. The sprinkled blood, applied in every case of fresh defilement, stands for the cleansing efficacy of that precious blood. God has called us, therefore, not to an absolute destiny so much as to a high and holy character, and we are to make our calling and election sure by claiming all the privileges of grace and giving all diligence to walk in all the will of God.

3. Begotten, born again, newborn babes (1 Peter 1:3, 23; 2:2). This is translated literally, "regenerated." It refers, of course, to the work of the Holy Ghost, through which we become the children of God and partakers of the new life, and without which our Lord has told us that we shall neither see nor enter into the kingdom of God. But in the third of these passages is a special and most beautiful sense intended by the phrase, "as newborn babes,

desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." The idea is not that at a certain stage of our experience we are to be newborn babes, but that this is to characterize our whole Christian life, and that the ideal spirit of the child of God is the simplicity, sincerity, docility, and sweetness of the little child. We are not to be childish, but we are to be childlike. The ordinary conception of Christian life looks back to the halcyon days when we first believed as a springtime that will never come again. We speak and sing of

"The sweet comfort and peace
Of a soul in its earliest love."

But our Lord severely rebukes the Ephesian church because it had left its first love, and He means surely to imply that we should never lose the tenderness of the newborn babe. This will keep us surely, as the apostle so well expresses it, from "all guile, and hypocrisies and envies, and all evil speakings."

4. Obedient children. "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy," (1 Peter 1:14-16). Literally this verse means, "As the children of obedience." That is, it is so natural to them to obey that they are, as it were, born of the spirit of obedience. The following verse suggests also the idea of imitating the Father. "As he which hath called us is holy, so be ye holy." It is the same thought expressed by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 5:1 R.V., "Be ye therefore imitators of God as dear chil-

36 The Epistles of Peter, John, and Jude

dren." Obedience should be instinctive with us as God's children. This is also suggested in the next term attributed to believers.

5. Servants. "As the servants of God" (1 Peter 2: 16). Literally this is "as the slaves of God." Our ideas of service were unknown in classical times. A servant was a slave, his master's property, and belonged to him absolutely for purposes of pleasure, gain, or even crime. The apostle did not announce a crusade against slavery, though it was wrong in a hundredfold more aggravated sense than modern slavery ever was. But he told the slaves to be so true to their masters, and so blameless in their lives, that with well doing they should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. Christianity does not call us to great socialistic movements against the wrongs of society, but rather to purify and elevate the individual influence of Christians, so abolishing as it has done, the wrongs of woman and the cruelties of slavery. But from the human relation of the slave the apostle rises to the conception so dear to all New Testament writers, of God's ownership of us and our absolute slavery to His authority and will. The term despot is applied to God in this epistle, conveying the idea of the right of absolute proprietorship and control, and this the disciple loves to acknowledge and accept in implicit surrender and obedience.

6. The apostle now begins a series of figures with reference to believers, founded upon the types of the Old Testament and the calling of Israel as a people. The first of these is

Living stones. "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house," (1 Peter 2: 5). This is an allusion to the

Hebrew temple, and is connected with what he has already said about Christ, the Corner Stone. We are built upon Him and so attached to Him that we become partakers of His nature and His life. Just as you have seen a powerful magnet or loadstone attracting and holding to itself a great number of smaller pieces of metal so that they seem to be part of its substance and are held by an invisible and irresistible bond, so we are attracted and attached to Christ and built up in Him as a spiritual temple.

7. A spiritual house (1 Peter 2:5). This carries forward the figure from the individual stones to the entire temple, and at once brings before our minds the splendid figure of the temple and tabernacle service as a type of our spiritual life. Each of us should be a miniature of that sacred temple, and our whole life a constant offering up of spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For God has said to us, "I will be to them a little sanctuary," and we may so "dwell in the secret place of the Most High" and "abide under the shadow of the Almighty," and have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus," that every moment of our experience shall be a rehearsal of the sacred service of that ancient tabernacle. It is a delightful spiritual exercise to come in the secret fellowship of the soul, first to the altar of burnt offering where we lay our guilt and sin upon the Lamb of God, and know that we are accepted through His precious blood as a sacrifice and a sweet smelling savor. Then we may come to the cleansing laver where first we see our sins in its mirrored bosom, and then wash them away in its flowing waters. Now we are prepared to enter into the holy place through the sacred door which the priests

might enter, and claim the privilege of Christian priesthood. And this leads us to the next of these significant figures:

8. An holy priesthood (1 Peter 2:5). For the priesthood is not now confined to any exclusive class as in the Aaronic line, but we are all called to be priests unto God. And yet that does not mean that all believers really enjoy the privilege of priesthood, although they are entitled to it, for we must first qualify for this high and holy ministry. We are a holy priesthood, and he alone that hath clean hands and a pure heart can ascend into the hill of God and stand in the holy place. Therefore we must wash in the laver and enter in by the door which is Jesus Christ Himself in the fullness of His life. For He has said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." The "more abundant" life is the holy priesthood of which we have just spoken, and the secret place of the Most High where we may dwell as His hidden ones. There stands the golden candlestick with its perfect and supernatural light. For there is an inner light for the consecrated believer which the world cannot comprehend, but which speaks to the finer senses of the quickened spirit, and makes divine truth a vivid reality and Christ more real

"Than any outward object seen."

Next we come to the table of shewbread, a type of Christ our living bread, and find in Him the supply of all our need and the sustenance of all our life. A little farther on stands the golden altar of incense with the censer with burning coals and fragrant frankincense, and the whole

chamber of this inner sanctuary is filled with the sweet odors of divine communion, "the peace of God that passeth all understanding," and the very breath of heaven. Yes, and even farther in we may enter now, through the rent veil into the holy of holies, and dwell in the innermost presence of God where the Shekinah shines and the overshadowing wings of the cherubim remind us of our coming glory into which, indeed, in foretaste we may already enter. Thus we are a holy priesthood, and in the fellowship of the Spirit offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

9. A chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people (1 Peter 2:9). Now just as the previous phrases were all connected with the tabernacle and temple, so this series is similarly connected with the calling of Israel as a people. They were an elect race, a holy nation, a kingdom of priests, and a people for a possession. Had they fulfilled their high destiny, they would have become to the world what the four and twenty elders and the four living creatures are to the heavenly temple. They would have represented God to men and become the custodians of His sacred oracles and the leaders of His worship and His work among the nations. But Israel failed to understand and fulfill her high calling. Instead of being a peculiar people, she sought to be like the nations. Instead of recognizing God as her King, and being a theocratic kingdom as He had intended, she said, "Give us a king that we may be like the rest of the nations," and soon her kings and people were sunk in all the gross idolatries of the nations around them. No sooner had the kingdom reached its zenith in the glory of Solomon than

he introduced not only the luxuries but the abominable idolatries of Egypt and the world. And God had to rend the kingdom and send its people into captivity and even give over the sovereignty of the world to the Gentile nations, until Israel should learn that her only place must ever be that of a kingdom of priests and of a peculiar people. To that high destiny she is once more to come in the glorious day of her restoration under Christ her King. But now having lost her national calling for the time, God has called His Church to take her place, and to be instead His chosen generation, His holy nation, His royal priesthood, His peculiar people. Let us not forget that we can only enjoy this high destiny in separation from the world; and that when we become like the present evil age, we lose our separation and our glory, and the Lord will have to reject us too. This indeed is the sad picture of the last stage of Christianity as set forth in the Laodicean church just before the coming of the Lord. But while the Church as a body and a visible institution may thus be rejected by her coming Lord, the true Bride of the Lamb, the little flock of His hidden ones shall be kept true and pure as a people for His possession. Let us remember that this is our calling, to belong to Him and to Him alone, to represent Him to the world and to wait for our kingdom and glory when we also shall be glorified at His coming.

10. Strangers and pilgrims (1 Peter 2:11). The apostle began with one of these titles. It is fitting that he should return to it again at the close of this series of sacred names and titles for the people of God. Literally these terms may be translated sojourners and pilgrims.

The first expresses the idea that we have no home here; the second, that we have a home beyond, that we are pressing forward to it and that we are having it ever in view. One may be a stranger without being a pilgrim. A stranger is a tramp. The pilgrim is a traveler. The tramp is homeless. The traveler is going home. Both should be true of the child of God. We should be weaned from the world as a resting place or a goal of final hope and expectation. We are in it—but not of it. We have our earthly duties, occupations, and relationships, but it is only a stage on our journey home, and the true heart will often be lonesome for the home beyond. A poor Irish laborer who had spent forty years of his life amid the brick and mortar of the great city, went out to the country for a few days to work at a special job, and one morning as he stood in the field he heard a sudden whir of wings and saw a little speck shooting up into the air, and immediately there came a burst of music that filled his eyes with tears, and sent him to sit down on one of the rough building stones until the flood of memories that song awakened had surged through his simple heart. An American who had never noticed the song of the lark asked him what was the matter. "Oh," said the poor Irishman, "that bird made me think of the ould country and the days long gone by." Poor fellow, he had not heard the lark since his childhood, and it made him feel that he was a stranger in a strange land. Beloved, do you know the home longing? and best of all, are you going home? Are you not only a stranger, but a pilgrim too? They say the Swiss soldiers, when they sometimes hear the old horn that calls the sheep and cattle home at night in the Alpine

42 The Epistles of Peter, John, and Jude

valleys, throw down their arms and cannot be restrained from starting home. Is the heavenly country drawing you? Can you say like the little fellow whose kite was out of sight and some one asked him how he knew it was there, "I feel it pull"? Is your life projected on the heavenly scale? Are your friendships, your ambitions, your occupations, your money, your studies, and your life plans invested where moth and rust cannot come, nor thieves break through and steal?

"I am waiting for the coming of the Bridegroom in the air,
I am longing for the gathering of the ransomed over there;
I am putting on the garments which the heavenly Bride shall wear,
For the glad homecoming draweth nigh.

"I am letting go the pleasures and the treasures worldlings prize,
I am laying up my treasures and ambitions in the skies;
I am setting my affections where there are no broken ties;
For the glad homecoming draweth nigh."

IV

SOCIAL AND CIVIL DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well." "Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king" (1 Peter 2:13, 14, 17).

THE apostle here calls our attention to the duties of the Christian in all the various relationships of life.

1. As men. "Honour all men" (1 Peter 2:17). Peter had a great deal of human nature in him, and human nature is a very good thing to have if we have the divine nature, too. "Simon, son of Jona" as the Lord often called him, was a real man and had every cord of human feeling and sympathy vibrant. It cost him a great deal to be so human; but when a human heart is divinely sanctified, it is a great storehouse of power. So Peter looks at all men as men. He sweeps the larger circle of the race, and reminds us that in every human being there is something of infinite value, something that God appreciates, something that brought Christ all the way from heaven to die, and something that we can find in every soul and make it a point of contact to better things. It was of this the Scotch poet sang so much better than he lived when he said:

"The rank is but the guinea's stamp,
The man's the gowd (gold) for a' that."

It was this that Jesus sought and found when He reached the woman at the well through her heart, and even saw in the little Jew in the sycamore tree something worth saving and transforming into heavenly gold. God help us to see the value of a human soul, and to be able to touch it. It was Lord Shaftsbury who once slapped on the shoulder a poor drunken fellow just getting over a terrible temptation and said, "John, by the grace of God, we'll make a man out of you yet," and that touch of a human hand was never forgotten. The poor drunkard lived to be a man of God and a blessing to his fellowmen. Over in Indiana there was a woman who had been the terror of her town, and even in the penitentiary she had to be confined and bound with chains. Nobody had ever been able to approach her. One day a quiet Quakeress called at the prison and asked to speak to her; and as the manacled criminal was brought in with scowling and cursing lips, she simply stepped up to her, and saying with unobtrusive kindness the two little words "My sister," she kissed her on both cheeks. The woman staggered as if struck. She tried for a moment to resume her old violent manner, and then burst into tears, saying that it was her first pure kiss since her mother died, and from that hour she was a changed woman. God help us to "honour all men," and by His grace to find the angel in the roughest block of marble.

2. As citizens. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme, or unto governors," etc. (1 Peter 2:13). Peter had his lesson on the subject of civil government that day in Capernaum when the natural Simon rose in

irritation against the tax collector, and the Lord so graciously supplied the money and shared the burden with Peter as he uttered that beautiful phrase, "For me and thee." No true Christian can be an anarchist. While there is an extreme of spread-eagle patriotism, there is also a middle ground of Christian loyalty which recognizes the powers that be as ordained of God, and even when they are not altogether as they should be, submits and supports "for the Lord's sake." Especially in a country like the United States, and to a great extent even under limited monarchies, is the individual Christian responsible for his part in good government; for if the people be the kings and their elective voice determines the quality of the government, surely no sincere Christian can be indifferent or negligent concerning his civic duties.

3. As members of society. "Finally, be ye all of one mind having compassion one of another, love as brethren, . . . be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it" (1 Peter 3:8-11).

Here we have a fine picture of the good manners of the child of God. There is nothing among the things of secondary importance more attractive than social grace, refinement of manners, and the spirit of deportment of a true lady or gentleman. The Christian should always be a gentleman. The spirit of Christ will lift the commonest life to a higher plane of culture, and you can tell immedi-

ately by the dress and the deportment of the new convert that he has come into the society of higher beings. The lack of this is very sad and very hurtful to the cause of Christ. Fenelon was so much of a gentleman that one of the courtly infidels of England upon leaving his house, said that if he had stayed much longer he would have been compelled by the charm of the French divine to become a Christian. On the other hand, by our brusqueness how much we dishonor our Master, and repel hearts that would have sought Him!

The spirit of Christ will invariably show itself on the railroad train, in the church aisle, in the little courtesies of the home, in a thousand minute touches which together constitute a great part of the experience of everyday life. These things are not matters of temperament or education. They can be cultivated until they become the habit of our life. There is a little tract entitled *The Girl for Whom Nobody Cared*. She was good in her way and had no serious faults of character or conduct, but rather prided herself on her independence, met her friends with a careless nod, and never wasted words in social amenities and what she was pleased to consider empty forms. The result was that in due time she became thoroughly disliked, and people avoided her as much as she had avoided them. Of course, it became extremely embarrassing to her when she really discovered it, and she had a good cry and an earnest conference with her sensible aunt. The result was that she took some good advice and resolved from that time to study her manners as well as her intentions, and deliberately to plan to say or do some courteous thing to everybody she met. The first person was a garrulous

neighbor of whom she was always particularly tired. But this morning she set to work on her with her new lesson. "How is Jimmie?" she asked. And the old lady was delighted to tell her how Jimmie had just got over the measles and a dozen little tiresome things that made the mother's face glow with pleasure to find a willing listener, and the effect was contagious. The young lady herself became strangely interested in the pleasure she had so easily given to the other. And so the first lesson was a complete success. A little farther on she met Sissy, the daughter of the washerwoman, whom she was used to pass with a very curt nod as quite beneath her. But now there was a gracious smile, a moment's pause, and a kind word of thanks to Sissy for having brought the laundry so promptly the day before, and greatly accommodated her as she had a social engagement for which she needed her clean dress. Before long she had exhausted all subjects except the weather, but even a kindly remark about the weather, especially in good weather, is more cheerful than a silent nod; and so when she returned home her face was shining and her day had been a great success. It was not long before the girl that nobody liked was the girl that everybody liked, and she had found inexpensive kindness more precious than gold.

A good deal of this has to do with faults of the tongue, and so Peter is as decided as James in reminding us that if we would have good health, long life, and God's blessing, we must keep our tongue from evil and our lips from speaking guile. This, too, can be studied if we habitually remember the Psalmist's prayer, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips." In this

way many of the weakest and most foolish of God's children have learned to be so guarded that their very silence speaks for Christ and a life of victory as no words could. Let us remember that we are called to dispense blessing. This is our occupation to scatter sunshine and make others glad.

An old Quaker was once visited by a garrulous neighbor who complained that he had the worst servants in the world, and everybody seemed to conspire to make him miserable. "My dear friend," said the Quaker, "let me advise you to oil yourself a little." "What do you mean?" said the rather irritated old gentleman. "Well," said the Quaker, "I had a door in my house some time ago that was always creaking on its hinges, and I found that everybody avoided it; and although it was the nearest way to most of the rooms yet they went round some other way. So I just got some oil, and after a few applications it opened and shut without a creak or a jar, and now everybody just goes to that door and uses the old passage. Just oil yourself a little with the oil of kindness. Occasionally praise your servants for something they do well. Encourage your children more than you scold them, and you will be surprised to find that a little sunshine will wear out a lot of fog, and a little molasses is better than a great deal of vinegar." Be courteous.

4. As servants. "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward" (1 Peter 2:18). We have already seen that the condition of a Roman slave was not only much worse than that of a modern servant, but really very much worse than anything we know in connection with modern

slavery. And yet to these selfish, brutal, cruel masters and mistresses, the Christian slave was to be obedient, and by his conduct seek to win them to higher things. If they were in error, as servants sometimes are, and were buffeted for it, they were to take it patiently. And there is no higher quality in man or woman than to be able to make an apology with humility and yet with dignity. But if they were innocent, how much more might they endure their wrong and wait for God's vindication.

In the present day almost every position in life involves the idea of service, and more or less of subjection to a higher authority. Let us render this for Christ's sake, even when it is not due for the sake of the person immediately concerned. How it exalts our menial toil to realize that we are working for Him, and that some day He will thank us and reward us before the universe! In such a service nothing is menial or degrading. The motive glorifies the deed. There is no smaller man in the world than he who is ashamed of manual labor or honorable employment. In a book of *The Life of Washington* it is said that riding by among his encampments in military undress, he found a petty officer ordering a small squad of men to change the position of a heavy gun which seemed beyond their strength, while he was coolly looking on, giving orders but not touching the heavy burden himself. The general, unrecognized by the officer or men, sprang from his horse, and putting his shoulder to the wheel soon helped them to lift the heavy load and place the gun in position. Then he turned to the petty officer and asked him why he wasn't helping. "Why," said he, "I'm a corporal." "Then, Mr. Corporal," said he, "the next time

you have a load too heavy for your men and want assistance just send for the commanding officer to come and help you. I bid you good morning," and the General withdrew, leaving the Corporal discomfited and the men infinitely amused. Let us take up our burdens with new heart and bear them for Him, who, like us, was a Man of sorrow and toil, and even in heaven is not thinking of His own ease or self-indulgence, but as our girded Priest ever living to make intercession for us.

5. As wives and husbands. "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning . . . let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." (1 Pet. 3:1-4.) If the position of a servant was extremely trying in ancient Rome, much more difficult and confused was the position of a wife, and the state of society with regard to marriage. Woman was by universal consent regarded as the inferior of man, and the wife of a heathen was subject to much humiliation and wrong. But the apostle tells the Christian wives not to desert their unworthy husbands, but so to live as to win them for God. Many a wife has done this. The Scriptures discountenance the marriage of Christian women to ungodly men, yet it often happens that both are unsaved at the time of marriage; and when the wife becomes a follower of Christ, under these circumstances there are the strongest reasons for expecting the grace of God to interpose for the salvation of her husband.

And even if she has made the mistake of marrying against the Word of God, all the more should she repair her wrong by endeavoring to bring her husband to Christ.

The secret of woman's supremest and sweetest attraction is here in a most beautiful phrase. Her ornament is not to be outward fashion and display, but a meek and quiet spirit, the beauty of the hidden man of the heart, the loveliness of character, gentleness, and love. This is woman's kingdom, and there is no doubt that many a man would be a better man if he had a different wife. Dear sisters, recognize your calling and rise to your high scepter and noble ministry. While marriage is not the lot of every woman, yet if God gives to woman a true and happy marriage, there is no higher vocation, there is no sweeter or nobler task than to live to be the blessing and crown of another life of which hers is the inspiration and the benediction. "My wife has been an open book to me," said an infidel who had read all other books in vain, and who yielded his heart to Christ because the beautiful life that was linked with his compelled his confidence and won his heart.

And the husband, too, has his reciprocal responsibilities. "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered" (1 Peter 3:7). The phrase "according to knowledge" seems to require of the husband an intelligent understanding of the partner of his life, a thoughtful love that recognizes her disabilities and difficulties as the weaker vessel, and finds his highest honor in honoring her. The tendency of modern social life is dis-

integrating the home. The husband finds his substitute in his club, and the wife follows with her receptions and the program of social calls, and, of course, it is his fault as much as hers. A wise wife uttered a well-merited reproof of this state of things one day when she asked her husband to permit her to make an appointment for some evening to meet a mutual friend. But every evening was occupied by him with some society. On Thursday night it was the Odd Fellows' Society, on Friday night it was the Foresters' Society, on Saturday night it was the Masonic Society, and on Sunday night it was the Church Society. At last his wife gave him a keen look and said, "My dear, I think in the multitude of your societies you have forgotten one." "What one is that?" he said. "Why," said she, "it is your wife's society."

But the real secret of a true Christian home life is given us by the apostle's reference to united prayer. "Walk together," he says, "as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered." This is the spark of celestial fire that will keep the altar of home from growing cold and love from dying out in the ashes of bitterness. How many of you fathers and husbands are keeping up the family altar? How many of you are praying every day with your wife? Is not this the telltale secret of all your troubles? Let us go back to Bethel and dwell there, and God will love and bless the dwellings of Jacob as well as the tabernacles of Zion.

Dr. Norman McLeod tells of a father that burst into his study one day with the bitter cry that his daughter had died that morning; and, added the father, "I hope she has gone to be with Christ, but if she has, she has gone to

tell that never in all her life did she hear a prayer in her father's house."

7. As Christian brethren. "Love as brethren" (1 Peter 3:8). "Use hospitality one to another" (4:9). "Yea, all of you be subject one to another" (5:5). "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (4:10). These are some of the social obligations of the disciples of Christ. Space will not allow us to enlarge upon them now, but the keynote of all is the same that has rung through all other relationships, "*For the Lord's Sake.*" This will make you a faithful servant to the worst of masters, a loving wife to the man that you could not love for his own sake, a genial and courteous friend, that you may the better represent your Lord and attract others to Him, a subject and a citizen for Chirst, and a Christian worker adjusted to your brethren, fitted into your place, and so "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17). Lord, shed this supernal light on every common thing till it shall shine in the light of God like the glory which the sun reflects from the meanest bit of broken glass.

"So let your works and actions shine
To show the doctrine all divine."

V

SANCTIFICATION

“Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16).

“Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).

WE HAVE already seen what Peter has to say to us about regeneration and the Christian life and calling. Let us now listen to his testimony concerning sanctification and the deeper experiences of our Christian life and growth.

I. REGENERATION AND SANCTIFICATION

1. Regeneration brings us life, but sanctification brings us “life more abundantly.”
2. Regeneration brings us life, but sanctification brings us life that comes out of death; the death-born life which has entered into the crucifixion of Christ, and the power of His resurrection.
3. Regeneration brings us into Christ, sanctification brings Christ into us. “Abide in me, and I in you,” implies a twofold relation. “In Him” is to be saved; “in you” is to be sanctified. It is the indwelling life of the Lord Jesus in personal union and manifestation to the soul.
4. Regeneration makes us the subjects of the Holy Spirit’s working, but sanctification makes us temples of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling. In regeneration the Spirit is working upon us as the builder of the house; in sanctification He has become the resident of the dwelling and

enters to abide as our guest, or, rather, as our host, while we dwell with Him in the fellowship of the Spirit.

5. Regeneration comes to us through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as our Saviour ; sanctification comes to us through full surrender and faith in the incoming and indwelling of the Comforter. It is as we yield ourselves to God and give Him the right of way, without a single reservation, that He accepts the offering and makes us His abode.

Now this twofold experience runs through all the personal and public types of the Bible. We see in Jacob the revelation of God at Bethel, through which he became the servant of Jehovah, and then the deeper experience at Peniel, through which he became the prince of God. We see it in Moses, in his first choice of God in Egypt, and then his deeper experience in Midian. We see it in Job and Isaiah ; we see it in Simon Peter and the other disciples with their new experience after Pentecost ; and Paul seems to give us this chapter in his own experience in the seventh of Romans, through which he passed into the victory of the eighth. We see it very definitely in the passage of the Red Sea and the exodus of Israel, which represents our salvation ; and then the crossing of the Jordan and the entrance into Canaan, which represents our sanctification. We see it in the Passover, which marked the first year of Israel's history, the setting out under the blood, even as we step out from the cross of Calvary ; and then the equally marked beginning of the second year when the tabernacle was dedicated and anointed, and the cloud came down and entered in as the Shekinah presence of Jehovah in the holy of holies, the

latter representing the incoming and indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the consecrated soul. But time and space forbid enlargement. Beloved, have you also entered into the “twofold life”?

II. SANCTIFICATION—ITS PRINCIPLES AND PROCESS

1. It is an obligation. God commands us to be holy. We are called to be holy. He will not excuse anybody from holiness. We have no right to call ourselves His children if we continue to live in sin. “Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid.” God forbids you to continue in sin. There are no two classes of Christians between which you may choose; there are no options here. Every child of God is called to be holy.

2. The pattern and source of sanctification. “Be ye holy; for I am holy.” God is our standard, and as His children we must be like Him. No lower standard will pass. We must not aim to be as good as some people; we must not excuse ourselves because we are no worse than others. It is God who is our pattern. “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

But He is not only the pattern, but the source. His holiness is the guarantee of ours. He commands because He gives what He commands. Out of His fullness we receive and shine in His reflected light, even as the planets that shine in the light of the great day star.

3. The secret of holiness is death and resurrection. Peter gives it to us very profoundly in the fourth chapter and the first verse: “Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the

same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin." This thought, this great principle and truth that Christ died, will become a powerful weapon and victorious armor in our experience as we enter into it in fellowship with Him. Sanctification is not the improvement of our natural character, not even the cleansing of our spirit. It is to discover that we are wholly lost and utterly helpless, and to yield ourselves over to Him, to die to self as well as sin, to our natural goodness as well as natural sinfulness, and then receive a new life altogether from Him: Indeed, we are to receive Christ Himself, the risen one, as our new life, and then be as though we had been born out of heaven, and were not the same spirit that formerly lived in sin. Oh, what an inspiration this gives to the new life, to be wholly free by death from the entangling weight of our old habits, memories, and the discouraging sense of our past, and to spring, death-born, into a life of holiness and victory. It is our privilege.

4. Sanctification is the gift of God's grace. We pass over now to the second epistle of Peter to supplement the teachings of the first, and there we are taught in the first chapter and the third verse that, "His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness." He hath given unto us this higher life. It is not an attainment, but a bestowal. God has provided the robes of the sanctified, and we simply put them on, and claim His efficiency and His complete provision for every spiritual condition and need. It is now awaiting you, beloved reader, if you will simply recognize your need of it, your helplessness to work it out yourself, and in full surrender

accept Him for all that you can never be alone. "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ," and put Him on now.

5. Sanctification comes to us through our being made "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). God is our sanctification. The very nature of God passes into us. It is a divine holiness. Sanctification is not a degree of progress on the old plane, but it puts us entirely upon a new plane, and we pass out of the human into the divine, and henceforth it is not the best that man can be and do, but the best that God can be and do. Therefore, it becomes natural for us to be holy, just as once it was natural for us to be sinful. We act according to the divine nature in us, and our choices, desires, and ministries are spontaneous and free, and obedience is just a luxury instead of a duty.

6. Sanctification comes to us through knowing God, and believing His word of promise. This is very finely brought out by the apostle in the opening verses of his second epistle. "Whereby," he says, "are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature." It is through claiming the promises that we receive the Holy Spirit and the divine nature. We take His Word and present it as a check on the Bank of Grace, and He turns it into the currency of spiritual blessing and actual grace. So again Peter says, He "hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us" not "*to* glory and virtue," but "*by* his glory and virtue." That is to say, His glory and virtue, His divine excellency, revealed to us by the Spirit, calls us to the same high and holy character; and as we know Him, we become like Him.

The power by which we appropriate these precious promises and make the gifts of God's grace personal and real is faith. But even this faith is not a struggling effort of our weak will, but the apostle tells us we "have obtained like precious faith." The faith is given, and so from first to last it is all grace. God reaches out to us the fullness of His love and power, and then He puts into our paralyzed hand the energy to reach out and grasp the blessing and make it ours.

7. Once more the apostle's language implies that we enter into this experience of sanctification at a definite moment of time. It is not something into which we gradually drift, but it is a crisis point up to which we come and at which we settle something forever. This is implied in the peculiar Greek tense known to scholars as the aorist tense, used in this passage, verse 4, "Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." We have no tense in the English grammar corresponding to this. It denotes an act accomplished at a given moment in the past, and quite finished. Therefore, at a given moment we have escaped the corruption that is in the world through evil desire; we were delivered from the world and the flesh by becoming "partakers of the divine nature" and receiving "all things that pertain unto life and godliness." We do not drag through a dreary and endless circle of vain attempts, but we come up to Jordan, we enter in, we pass over, and we sing henceforth, "I am over in the promised land." Beloved, this is the gospel of holiness according to Peter. Surely, it is good news, it is all divine, it is all freely given, it is all for you. Have you received it? Will you receive it?

III. SANCTIFICATION AND GROWTH IN GRACE

Now we are ready to grow, and, therefore, it is in the second epistle that the writer advances to these higher experiences and bids us to go on to perfection. Had we attempted to grow before, it would have been distortion. We must have a true life complete in all its parts before we can safely develop it. There must be a good foundation and every wall connected before we can rear the superstructure with safety. Now then, the foundation is laid, and so the apostle adds, "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith" (1:5). Dean Alford has translated this, "Because of this thing;" not "beside," but "because." Just because you are sanctified, therefore, grow. Because you have resources, such a glorious guarantee, and divine supplies, therefore, go forward and make the most of them. But notice even in our growth that the same principle of grace must be recognized all the way through. We are not to grow in character and virtue and strength, but we are to grow in grace. That means we are to grow in the habit of receiving, of being more and more helpless and dependent every moment to the end of life; it is to be all grace to the finish, and the more we grow, the more will it be true, "He must increase, but I must decrease."

This is also finely expressed in the phrase, "Add to your faith." You are not to add to yourself, but to your faith. And what is faith? It is just the power to receive from God something which you yourself cannot do or have independently. Faith is just a hand to take His grace. Therefore, the way to grow is just to take from Him in each new emergency the supply needed for that

occasion. Do we want more love? When we come up to some hard place where we are wronged, we are not to struggle to work up love in ourselves. We are not to be discouraged because we do not find the love there. We are not to pump at our dry well until we get worn out and discouraged. But we are to do as you would do with such a well; pour a little water in, and then it will flow freely out. Go to God and take the love from Him. Tell Him you are unloving and helpless, and ask Him to put the heart of Christ into your cold heart, and thus add to your faith His love. And so, if you need courage or patience or joy, no matter what, just draw upon your bank account. Use the faith that He has given to claim the exceeding great and precious promises, and you will get tired asking before He gets tired giving.

And now the apostle gives us a very fine and symmetrical portrait of the graces and features in which we are to grow. First he says, "Add to your faith virtue." This does not mean moral purity, for all this has already been settled in your sanctification; but the word "virtue" is derived from an old Latin root, which means manhood, courage, virility. It is spiritual forcefulness. God does not want us good and amiable weaklings, but men and women that accomplish things; lives that tell for God and the race. He will give us His strength and make us good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and "strong in the Lord and the power of His might."

Next is knowledge. Blind courage is often wild and dangerous. Power without intelligence and judgment is distortion. He wants us not only to have the "spirit of power," but also the spirit of "a sound mind." He will

give us His wisdom and knowledge, for "if any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God . . . and it shall be given him." How wise Christ was! How beautifully we find Him always in order, on time, with a ready answer for His enemies and a right message for needy souls—a pattern of divine wisdom. And so, by faith we may take His Spirit to rest upon us, as "the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord," that shall make us of "quick understanding in the fear of the Lord."

Next is temperance. That is self-control, the power of poise, the balanced character, the reserve force that can hold your tongue, and wait in the silence that so often speaks more vitally than words. He will give it through your faith and through His grace, if you are willing to be taught to be silent unto God and let Him mold thee.

Next is patience. That is the power to suffer not only that which comes to you from the hand of God, but that, so much harder, which comes to you from the hand of man. This is the fusing process that burns all the ingredients into one living mass of spiritual strength. No character is permanent, no quality is fixed, until it has been proved in the furnace of affliction. But patience is His gift. The savage can meet suffering with stoical indifference, but only the heart of Christ can stand in the judgment hall or the garden of Gethsemane and suffer long and yet be kind. You will come up to your trials and fail at first, but you will find the unfailing One at your side, and if you will lean hard on Him, He will give you His victory; and through each new trial you will add to your faith patience, until patience has her perfect work,

and you will stand "perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

Next comes godliness. This is the quality of the Spirit which crowns the character. This is the upper chamber, the observatory, where we look up and out upon the heavens, where we meet and know God, where we commune with Him and worship Him and do all things unto His glory. It is this which gives spirituality and devoutness to the character, and makes saints like Rutherford, Mc-Cheyne, Fenelon, and the souls whose very names crush our hearts with sacred veneration. Into this we may grow by faith, for piety is one of the gifts of God; and we can have as much as we can claim and wear as a divine habiment.

But there is danger even on spiritual lines. We may not become extreme and selfish. The cloister and the cell are not the finishing rooms for holy character, but the slums of sin, the wastes of heathenism, and the dark places of human suffering. It is here we reach the largest circumference of spiritual growth. There is a circle, a vertical circle, that rises heavenward and takes in God and all the heights of devotion and communion; but there is another circle, a lateral circle, that takes in all the length and breadth of loving sympathy and service. And so he adds two more features to this divine portrait: "brotherly kindness" and "charity." The first relates to our brethren, the love we owe to the household of faith. The second relates to the great world beyond, the unsaved, the unhappy, the sick, the poor, the lost, our enemies, the people that we cannot love naturally, but whom God has placed in our pathway to teach us that great and heavenly grace he here calls charity.

Such is the fullness of the stature of a perfect man in Christ; the ideal up to which God would have us grow under the molding hand of His grace. Such are the seven colors of this sacred prism—seven, yet one; the white light of faith and grace separated into the sevenfold graces of courage, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity.

There is a fine shade of expression in the beautiful Greek in connection with the word “add.” Literally, it means “chorus.” It is a technical word, describing the business of the choir leader who harmonized the music at some great concert in all the parts, voices and instruments, until they blended in one magnificent harmony; many, yet one. And so we are to chorus into our Christian life all the graces of the Spirit until they shall blend in symmetrical proportion, and nothing shall be exaggerated, but all shall be in harmony, and the effect of the whole shall be that our lives shall become a sublime chorus of praise, a doxology to the glory of Him, of whom and by whom and for whom are all things.

Once more, we are to give all diligence to this. The Greek word again is forceful. It reminds one of the finger post which they used to place on the amphitheatre in the Grecian games at the homestretch, containing one Greek word, meaning, literally, “make speed.” They did not place this at the beginning of the course, but near the end, just at the place where the prize was to be lost or won. There the racers were summoned to the last strenuous endeavor. And so it is after we are sanctified and have learned the fullness of Jesus, that God is calling us from on high to the utmost vigilance and diligence,

and to make speed, that we "so run that we may obtain."

In conclusion, the apostle gives us several strenuous reasons why we should thus make speed.

1. This will save us from spiritual nearsightedness. "He that lacketh these things is blind and cannot see afar off." The reason some people never get a vision of God or deeply realize spiritual things is because they live on too low a plane.

2. It will keep us from living too near the edge. "He hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." Some people seem to like to live on the edge of the pit and the wonder is that they do not slip back again. God bids you press on from the borderland of danger into all the strength and breadth of the land of promise. If you do not, you will find yourself back even in your old sins.

3. "If ye do these things, ye shall never fall"; literally, "stumble." Would you be kept from stumbling? Then press on. It is easier to be holy than to be half sanctified, just as it is easier for the car to run on both tracks than to run with one wheel on the paving stones.

4. This will make your life fruitful and active, "for if these things be in you, and abound, they will make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful"; literally, "idle nor unfruitful." How little some Christians accomplish for God! How wasteful of time and opportunity their precious lives! It is because they live too low. Get filled with the Spirit, and you shall neither be idle nor unfruitful.

5. "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." This is the crowning reason for

a life of devotion. There is a glorious prize and there is a solemn possibility of missing it. I have seen three different persons land from a great ocean steamer. One landed as a criminal, a prisoner bound with chains, and led away to the Tombs and the dark future of punishment. And so some will reach yonder destination. A second stepped down from the deck on the gangplank, a stranger in a strange land. He was not in danger of arrest, but there were no familiar faces to greet him, and he almost wished he were back in his own country. And some shall reach the eternal port in this way, saved as by fire, but no soul to meet them at heaven's gate; strangers even in the home above. God save you from such a home coming. But I have seen another figure on that deck, his face glowing with pleasure, his eyes sparkling with tears of joy, his hat and handkerchief waving in response to thousands on the shore who were welcoming him home. And as he landed amid the cheers of the musical bands and the shouts of ten thousand voices, they carried him on their shoulders to receive ovations of honor and the highest rewards that his nation could bestow. He was a public servant and had done his duty and had finished his course with joy. He was coming home to his reward. There shall be such abundant entrance through yonder heavenly gates. Shall they be for you? Shall they be for me? We are making our history now. God help us to write it in enduring letters that shall shine in that glorious day.

The same word translated "chorus," in verse five, is used again in verse eleven, and translated "ministered"; literally, "an entrance shall be chorused unto you abun-

dantly." The things you did and suffered for God, the graces of your Christian life which you put on in the earthly struggle, the souls you led to the Saviour—all these shall meet you there, and like celestial attendants accompany your triumphal march and sing your coronation hymn as they bid you welcome to your great reward. Oh, with such an inspiring hope, let us give all diligence to receive all the possibilities of grace and obtain all the rewards of glory! ..

VI

MINISTERS OF CHRIST

"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Peter 5:2-4).

ONE cannot help seeing the personality of the man back of all his letter. All through there looms up the figure of "Simon, son of Jona," as we see him so vividly in the portraits of the Gospels. And no one can read these last words of his without hearing like an undertone the last words of his own Master to Simon yonder on the shores of the Galilean sea as by sweet, delicate indirection He just barely recalled Peter's threefold denial. Though He did not directly mention it, He just recalled enough to remind him that it was forgotten and forgiven, and then prompted him to higher service than he had ever been trusted with before, and gave him the threefold commission as a kind of salve for the threefold wound of his guilty heart, "Feed my sheep," "Feed my lambs," "Feed my feeble sheep." This is the literal force of the words given in John's Gospel. And Peter carries it out here with such tender, sacred sweetness. "Tend the flock of God that is among you, exercising the oversight thereof . . . according to God" (as the Revised Version translates it). That is just how God cares for us, just how the great Shepherd cares for you and me. "And when the

chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory, that fadeth not away."

There are three distinct lines of thought unfolded here.

I. THE SOURCES OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth" (1 Peter 4:11). There is the source of our ministry. It is all of God. There are two points very clearly brought out here; first, the matter of it, and secondly, the manner of it. It is an oracle of God. It is not your own opinion you are to give, not your own ideas, not your own knowledge, culture, or wisdom, but you just stand as an oracle to give the message that came from heaven and that you cannot change or modify, but your sole business is to repeat it, to give to men what God has given to you; the oracle of God, the authority of God, the very message of God Himself.

It is said that David Hume used to go to hear John Brown, a devoted Scotch preacher. David Hume was an infidel of the boldest type. They asked him why he went to hear Brown. "It is a real pleasure to me," he said, "for the man believes what he says, and it is a perfect luxury to listen to a man who preaches what he believes." Someone took David Hume to hear one of the most popular preachers of the time, and when asked afterwards whether he liked it, replied, "That man preached as if he did not believe a word of it." He went to hear Brown on the same afternoon, and came away saying, "That man preaches as though he got the sentence straight from heaven, and then waited, as if Jesus was standing at his

elbow, and said, ‘Lord, what will I say next?’” That was the testimony of an infidel to a man that preached as the oracle of God, the voice of God, the messenger of the divine revelation. Oh, in these days when every sort of substitute is being sought for the Word of God, give us the ministry of the Word!

“Is this God’s Book?” asked a little child of his mother. “Yes, dear.” “Had we not better send it back to God, if it is God’s Book, because we never use it?” And that might be said of a good many today.

It is very sad that so many modern preachers should waste their own and their hearers’ time exploring heaven and earth for some new and original idea, when God’s Word is a great mine of yet unexplored wealth and priceless treasure. God will always honor the ministry that honors His holy Word. “Preach the word.”

The manner of the message. “Let him do it [minister] as of the ability which God giveth” (1 Peter 4:11). Not only are we to give God’s Word, but with God’s ability, with the enduement of the Holy Ghost. We are to give it with the consciousness of our inability, and we are to seek each new message from Him, and then seek the power to speak it. How Paul constantly cried out for “utterance” to be given to him; not merely the truth—he taught the truth, he knew his message—but each time he wanted the fire of God to infuse it, the Holy Ghost to somehow put life into it. We may give the same message and it will be powerless if it is not in the ability that God gives. We need the flash of power every time, and especially when we are speaking the word that is to be the creating word to bring a soul from death to life.

Oh, how we need to be steeped in the very life and heart of God! God help you to help your pastor with the ministry of believing prayer, that he may go, like John Brown, with Jesus Christ at his elbow and the power of the Holy Ghost in his heart.

It is said that a church once began to complain about its minister who had lost his power, and when they came to him, he said, "Yes, and the reason is I have lost my prayer book." "Why," they said, "we thought you were a dissenting clergyman." "Yes," he said, "but my people are my prayer book; and they have stopped praying for me, and I have, therefore, lost my prayer book." God give you the ministry of prayer. You will get back just what you ask for, all the blessing you give your pastor. You will wonder how he will meet your difficulties, answer your need, and speak every word you are waiting for, and just because you prayed for him. And so may our ministry be strengthened by the ministry of prayer, and we speak "as of the ability which God giveth."

II. THE SPIRIT OF THE MINISTRY

1. It is a humble spirit. If Peter had wanted to tell the Church that he was going to be the Pope, what a splendid chance he had here! Why, Peter, you lost your opportunity; you could have let all the ages know that you were the first Pope, and that every man who came after you was going to be the lord of the whole Church of God. How could you miss your opportunity! Why, you only told the people that you were but an elder—"I who am also an elder" and he adds, If I want any higher honor, I was "a witness of the sufferings of Christ."

Perhaps he stole away that afternoon after they hung Him on the cross. Perhaps he was ashamed to be seen; but when it was all past and Jesus was hanging there, Peter came around when no one saw him, and for six long hours saw Christ dying. That was his honor—a “witness of the sufferings of Christ.” But he says he is a common elder, an ordinary minister of Jesus Christ the same as they. One is so struck with the simplicity of the Early Church, as Peter suggests it here, and this is the design of the great Head of the Church, to keep it simple, and to honor us according as we honor Him, and lay our heads in the dust at His blessed feet. God give us humility! I think it is the prayer we covet most, that God will keep our spirit lowly and broken. “Them that honor me, I will honor” (1 Samuel 2:30).

2. Deep sympathy with the suffering Saviour; “witness of the sufferings of Christ.” He was bathed in the tender sense of what it cost to redeem us, the Church of God. It was purchased with His own blood, the blood of Calvary, and this should be the inspiration of all our ministry.

3. Along with that, there is the spirit of inspiration, hope, our glorious reward, and also the privilege of being “a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.” It is no common ministry, but a high embassage, an honor before which all earthly honors are naught and not worthy to be compared. We are to be glorified with Him and bear away the crown of glory that shall never fade.

4. The shepherd spirit: feeding the flock of God, tending the flock of God. If you have ever seen a shepherd in the Scottish Highlands, or in some Eastern country,

you will know something of what this means; the picture of the veteran shepherd dying with his boys around him, while the wolves are howling over in the plain and mountain and valley. And he calls them to his side as he breathes his last—how sweetly the picture has been given to us—and they bend down to hear his last words while he breathes them out: “Boys, be good to the sheep.” That was the shepherd’s last thought. He knew them all by name; he had rescued them many a time. They were personally dear to him; he had risked his life for them. It is the shepherd spirit that loves and follows and personally tends the sheep. Literally it reads, “Tend the little flock.” It is not a great popular church, but a little flock. Look out for the hidden ones, the poor ones, those that belong to Him and will stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion. Jesus expresses to Peter the tenderness He would have the elders show to the little flock. “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?” And Peter answers, “Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee dearly. It is not only love, it is tenderness, Lord.” But the Lord would not have it at first. He spoke to him again, using the common word of love; and Peter was hurt. “Lord, do you mean to break my heart? I love thee dearly.” And then Jesus takes him at his own word, and says, “Do you love me dearly?” “Lord, thou knowest I do.” And the Master tells him that He is going to test him, so He says, “Feed my feeble sheep.” Go and help the people that are all broken up, and are hard to get along with, and are always getting lost and forgetting what they learn and are going astray. I love them best of all, Simon, and if you love me, dearly, that

is the ministry that can only be done by a heart that has been right up to my heart.

5. It should be disinterested. "Not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind." Rotherham's translation is, "not for shameful gain, but of eager mind." That is, a mind impelled by such intense desire for usefulness, and such a genuine love for souls that it needs no other incentive for any sacrifice or service. The spirit of gain has so penetrated everything in our age that even the ministry is not free from the danger of mercenary and selfish ambition. The most sacred callings are approached by the men who think that everything has its price. One of our distinguished bishops once stated in a public address in Philadelphia that he was visited in his library by a gentleman from the West who introduced himself as the representative of a politician, and then added, "Now, Bishop, one of your preachers is giving one of my friends a great deal of trouble by attacking his moral character, and we want you to stop him, and I am authorized to say that my friend will make it worth your while." The good Bishop quietly walked to the door, opened it and stood there holding it, while the visitor seemed unable to take in his meaning. "Does it not occur to you," said the Bishop, "that this interview is ended?" And yet, there are less glaring ways in which even the pulpit can be subsidized and its voice at least modified, if not silenced, for fear of offending wealthy and fashionable ears with too plain a message against popular forms of sin. If a man wants to be rich or successful, let him go into some other calling, but whatever else he does, let him not prostitute the ministry of Christ to sordid gain.

6. A consistent life and a holy example are the most potent factors in every ministry. The shepherd never drives, but always leads his flock, and the Chief Shepherd Himself says, "When he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them." The true minister will always live first what he preaches. The most spiritual messages will be neutralized without a holy life. Piety gives power to the simplest messages and to the life behind our words in ways most eloquent. "Being ensamples to the flock." Said a native convert among the Indians of North America to an inquiring visitor, "Your white men used to come and tell us about Christianity, about the Great Spirit of the heavens, and His Son Jesus Christ, but we looked at the white men, and they drank like us Indians, and they cheated us worse than we knew how, and we did not believe their doctrine. But one day Henry Ranch came among us, and after telling us about the Great Spirit and His Son Jesus Christ who came to die for sinful men, he laid down among us with my bow and tomahawk beside him, but without a fear, and he slept like a little child, knowing that I could kill him and no one would ever know it. And he awoke and lived among us like ourselves, sharing our hardships and doing everything good, and we saw as we looked at him that his doctrine was true, and that is why we are Christian Indians."

Mr. Spurgeon once told in a sermon how he had been tormented with doubts about the Bible, and at the close of the sermon a wise old deacon said to him, "Pastor, never tell us about your doubts again; it disturbs the weak and doubting. If they think that you are unsettled,

they will be unsettled much more. They look not so much to what you say as to what you are." And Mr. Spurgeon told his students never to throw the shadow of their weakness on the flock, but to stand before them in the strength of faith and holiness, and lead them as well as teach them.

III. THE REWARD OF THE FAITHFUL MINISTER

"When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away"; literally, "ye shall bear away the crown of glory." There is no investment like a good life. There is no reward so enduring as that which comes from the souls that we lift up and save, for the reward shall last as long as the soul which is its enduring monument. The mother who launches on the ocean of life a noble son and sees him take his place among the best of men, successful, honored, useful, blessed, and a blessing, has a reward that "fadeth not away." That life is her lasting imperishable recompense. The teacher who trains some splendid intellect for great achievement, and sees his favorite pupil become the leading statesman, philosopher, poet, or teacher of his time, has a "crown that fadeth not away," for that enduring life and its wide and lasting influence is his recompense. Thomas Arnold, the great teacher of England, lived in his distinguished pupils, many of whom became the most illustrious names of English literature and history. The soul-winner that leads someone to Christ, and then that soul in turn becomes the instrument in the conversion of a thousand more, has "a crown that fadeth not away," for as long as those souls shall last, he

shall be identified with that service. The millions who are yet to come from the land of Sinim will be the crown of the humble Sunday School teacher in an English village who brought Robert Morrison, China's pioneer missionary, to Jesus Christ. The glory of regenerated Africa shall be the crown of the man that led the weaver of Blantyre to become the missionary David Livingstone. Occasionally here we find the fruits of our prayers and tears, and we greatly wonder at the train of blessing that has come out of some loving ministry for Christ. But oh, what will it be when we meet the accumulation of it all yonder, and when it in turn has all eternity in which to multiply! A modern writer has calculated how much money would have accumulated from a single penny invested at compound interest at the birth of Jesus Christ, and it has been discovered by a simple calculation that it would take a row of fifty-seven figures to count the interminable millions, and the pile of gold that it would make would be bigger than a world—nay, bigger than five thousand worlds! That is the investment of one penny if you give it time enough to grow. Then tell me what the investment of a soul will grow to through the countless ages of eternity! Oh, for a holy ambition to put our lives into such service, not for the reward, but for the love of Him who gave Himself for us, and who will not forget to add the glorious recompense when the great work is done.

VII

THE COMING OF THE DAY OF GOD

"Looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God"
(2 Peter 3:12).

WE HAVE the apostle Peter's testimony to the preciousness of Christ, the blessedness of trial, the calling and life of the believer, the spirit and reward of true ministry, and now it remains to hear what he has to tell us about the coming of the Lord. His first epistle repeatedly refers to this blessed hope as a matter of course, but his second letter might almost be called a special treatise on the Lord's Coming, and a manual of warning and teaching peculiarly for the last days.

His testimony is the more impressive from the fact that he tells us in the beginning of his second letter that the Lord has shown him that he is not to live to see the advent, but is shortly to put off his earthly tabernacle. He speaks of it, therefore, under no bias of eager personal enthusiasm, but in the most calm and disinterested spirit, and gives them the message of the Lord as one who is to stand face to face to give his own account to God. This leaves no doubt, whatever, that Peter in no degree confounded the coming of the Lord with the experience of death. His going to be with Christ was a very different matter from the coming of Christ for His own. It would seem that up to a certain period, at least, even Paul had almost expected personally to live to meet the Lord in the air, and even John writes in the first person in expressing the blessed hope of seeing Him when He should

appear. But Peter has no such expectation. Therefore, his message is an entirely disinterested one, and is one of the Lord's last words to us, the people of the last days. Let us gather up these solemn and impressive teachings about the theme of all others most momentous in these crisis times.

I. GENERAL REFERENCES TO THE LORD'S APPEARING IN HIS FIRST EPISTLE

In 1 Peter 1:7, he speaks of it as the goal of hope for the tried and troubled ones, and he cheers them by the assurance that the trial of their faith shall be "found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Again, in the first chapter and the fifth verse he speaks of the salvation that is "ready to be revealed in the last time." It is only when Christ shall come that we shall fully know the length and breadth, the height and depth of the great salvation. It is hidden now; then it will be revealed. Again in the first chapter and the thirteenth verse he tells us of the "grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." This is the same thought as expressed in the last citation. In the fourth chapter and the thirteenth verse he assures the martyrs of Rome, who were about to be made blazing lamps, by Nero's cruel order, to light the streets of Rome, that when their Master's "glory shall be revealed," they shall be made "glad also with exceeding joy." In the fifth chapter and the fourth verse, he holds out to the faithful minister the coming of the Lord as the time of his great reward, for he says, "When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not

away." And in the fourth chapter and the seventh verse he addresses to the whole flock of Christ this serious admonition: "The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer."

Thus we see that the coming of Christ was a sort of undertone in all his messages, and is constantly assumed as the ground of warning and comfort, of faith and hope, of holy living and faithful service—this, the one supreme incentive and inspiration of everyday life, "unto the coming of the Lord."

II. THE TRANSFIGURATION A FORESHADOWING OF THE PAROUSIA

Passing now to the second epistle, with its more explicit teaching on this subject, he first tells them that the transfiguration of the Lord was a rehearsal and foreshadowing of the greater event of the Lord's Parousia. He uses this very term, which has come to be almost the technical term for the coming of Jesus for His saints, when he says, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming [parousia] of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount" (2 Peter 1:16-18).

This word, parousia, describes the first stage of the Lord's coming. Literally it means "presence," and it de-

notes, not the sudden and glorious epiphany in the clouds, but the gentle and secret appearing of the Bridegroom for His Bride, the presence which is already drawing near, and which, ere long, shall be fully manifested to His waiting ones as they are caught away when He comes as suddenly "as a thief" to gather His treasures from the earth.

Now the Transfiguration was a rehearsal, we have said, of all this. First, it manifested the Lord Himself in His glory, as He shall come in that day. Next, it brought the risen dead, in the person of Moses, to represent the great multitude who sleep in Jesus who shall be brought forth in resurrection glory at His coming. And further, it revealed the presence of the translated ones, who, without death, shall be caught up to meet Him, represented on the Mount by Elijah. All the parties are there, and the steps that lead to it are beautifully significant of the coming parousia. First, the little company, Peter and James and John, are detached and drawn a little closer to the Master. Then they rise with Him a little higher through the darkness of the night as they slowly ascend the heights of Hermon, and then, quietly, imperceptibly, while they almost slept, the glory has descended, and the Transfiguration is there. So He is calling apart His little flock today; so He is taking them nearer and higher in the darkening shadows of these last times; and so, some night or morn, suddenly they will find that He has come and that they are with Him in glory. Oh, that we may understand and be ever ready for that happy consummation!

III. THE WORD OF PROPHECY BETTER THAN THE
TRANSFIGURATION

Next he tells them, chapter one, nineteenth verse, that, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." That is, we have something better even than the Transfiguration scene which only the three disciples saw. We have the whole Word of God, which is a Word of Prophecy, its one burden being the coming of the Lord, and which is more sure than any vision or personal revelation that we could have. From Genesis to Revelation this Word continually unfolds the blessed hope. Even in Eden it was foreshadowed by the cherubim, the tree of life, and the lordship of man over nature. In antediluvian times Enoch was sent with this word of prophecy to proclaim to his age that "the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints." Abraham saw this day afar and understood his covenant as reaching on to millennial times, for the land was given to him for an everlasting possession. Jacob foresaw the coming of Shiloh and the going of the nations to Him. Joseph died giving commandment concerning his bones, because he wanted to have a part in the better resurrection. David sang of it in his triumphant songs. All the prophets from Isaiah to Malachi are crowded with this message. Daniel gives us the whole panorama of history, with this one supreme outlook, and John takes up the thread where Daniel left it, in his grander Apocalypse, and finishes the scroll of prophecy with the repeated echo, "Behold, I come quickly!" The teachings of Jesus and His apostles con-

tinually repeat the message, and the whole Bible is a "more sure word of prophecy" from beginning to end, concerning the coming of the Lord. Let us so study it, understand it, and use it, for "blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand" (Revelation 1:3).

IV. THE LORD'S COMING AN OBJECT LESSON

Next, the Apostle Peter gives us an object lesson of the Lord's coming from the Fall and the days of Noah and Lot. There are two passages; 2 Peter 2:4-9, "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked; (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;) The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished."

And the other one is 2 Peter 3:5-7. "For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then

84 The Epistles of Peter, John, and Jude

was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

These passages combine to teach us:

1. That a great catastrophe has more than once already overtaken this sinful world, and give us evidence that such a catastrophe may yet await ungodly men. The very strata of the globe tells the story of the Flood; and the Dead Sea yonder, as it rolls its sluggish waves over the ruins of Gomorrah, is one of the gates of hell, and both proclaim the coming of a day of judgment.

2. The elements were ready for the Flood. The waters were there, awaiting God's hand; and so the element of fire is stored up now, and only needs the touch of His hand to involve the terrestrial system in final conflagration.

3. The wickedness of man ripened as the judgment drew near; and so it is ripening again for the last cataclysm. "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man." As it was in the days of Lot, so shall it be once more. The crimes of violence and blood, the defilements of lust and unnatural crime, these are the increasing signs of our age, and these were the provocations of God's former judgment. The very shadows of our time are tinged with rays of light, for they betoken the coming day.

4. The longsuffering God waited in the days of Noah, and gave the race one hundred and twenty years of warning and mercy. So today, as Peter says, "The Lord is

not slack concerning His promise . . . but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). This is the reason that His coming waits.

5. The catastrophe came at last, sudden, swift, irretrievable; and so it will be then. It was too late to enter the ark when the flood came, and so, "When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape" (1 Thessalonians 5:3).

6. A remnant was saved. "Noah the eighth person," Peter says, was saved, and he "delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked." And so once more shall it be true: "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." The little flock shall be saved. They shall be caught away before the tempest breaks. That is a thrilling word in the Master's announcement of His coming. "Then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (Luke 21:27). But remember, beloved, that the emphatic word is *they*. It is not for you. God grant that you may never see this awful sight, for "then shall all tribes of the earth mourn." You should be nearer to His side that day. Your word is: "Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass and to stand before the Son of man." You are to escape these things. They are to see them, but you shall be above them all.

V. THE FINAL CATASTROPHE. HOW AWFUL IS THE PICTURE!

1. It will be sudden. "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night" (2 Peter 3:10).

It will be awful. "The heavens shall pass away with great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." The word here translated "melt" means "dissolved." The thought is not that the elements shall be destroyed, but they will be melted, dissolved, and then re-formed.

3. It will be by fire as once it was by flood.

4. It will be followed by "new heavens and a new earth; wherein dwelleth righteousness." This is the *Palingenesis*, the beginning again, the new creation, "the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began," as Peter said once before, in Acts 3:21.

VI. PETER'S ANSWER TO THE OBJECTIONS OF THE SCOFFER AND THE SKEPTIC

The apostle tells us that in the last days, this old prophetic Word will be rejected. The cultured science and philosophy of these times will not believe anything so absurd. Certain schools of science have been telling us that nature is uniform and invariable, and that there is no room for a crisis, for the principle of evolution has been established, and one thing just grows out of another, "and all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." This is a fine statement of evolution, and Peter's prophecy has already been fulfilled

in the teaching of these doctrines in our day. That is just what men are saying. But Peter answers them from the simple fact that nature is not invariable, that once already the waters have overwhelmed the land in the deluge, and that once again the pent-up fires of the earth's own bosom or the elements of combustion that fill the universe, will overwhelm the earth and heavens. Science furnishes her own answer. We know that it is one of the late discoveries of scientific philosophy that motion is convertible into heat. The coming of a meteor to our atmosphere sets the meteor immediately on fire. Were one of yonder worlds to strike the atmosphere of this globe, long before it reached the solid earth, the air would be a blaze of destruction. Yes, they tell us truly that were the earth's own motion to be arrested for an instant, that instant would set the whole earth on fire by the sudden shock of her swift movement of a million miles a day. Nay, from yonder heavens science has furnished the testimony of just such conflagration and dissolutions in the realms of space. Years ago, in the constellation Perseus, there blazed into prominence a star of the first magnitude and shone for many nights brighter than any other star in the heavens, and then it faded away, and it was pursued by the astronomers into invisibility. Several times since just such startling things have happened in yonder sky. In the constellations Auriga and Bootes, two such remarkable stars suddenly blazed before the eye of the telescope and then disappeared, and later one of them was rediscovered in an entirely different form floating on the sky as a planetary nebula. What did these things mean? Probably a great sun, perhaps with his attendant planets, burned

out in some awful conflagration, and then re-formed on a new plan, even as the earth and the heavens shall be dissolved, and then made new. Some day, from yonder stars, they shall behold just such a spectacle. This earth shall blaze into awful brightness, and then shall fade away. New scenes shall afterwards arise, perhaps not only this planet, but also on the larger system of worlds of which it is to be in the coming ages, perhaps, the center.

VII. THE PRINCIPLE OF TIME IN CONNECTION WITH THE COMING OF THE LORD

The apostle lays down a great principle with regard to our calculations of dates and chronologies. "Beloved," he says, "be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Peter 3:8). That is, we cannot fix the date of the Lord's coming by our chronometers or chronologies. It is fixed rather by spiritual conditions. One of our days may hasten it a thousand years, and one of our decades may mean little or nothing to bring it near. For a thousand years the Church slept, and the coming of the Lord did not move forward perceptibly. In these last times it is being intensely hastened. God says, "I will shorten the days"; and we may help to shorten them.

VIII. THE PRACTICAL PREPARATION FOR THE LORD'S COMING

Finally, this leads us to practical preparation for the Lord's coming which devolves upon us in view of these considerations. How may we hasten it?

1. It should be with us a matter of earnest longing and personal hope. "Looking for," means longing for and

expecting. Do we "love his appearing"? Are we longing for the Bridegroom?

2. We can hasten it by preparing the world for His advent. "Hasting unto," literally means "hasting forward the coming of the Lord." We can do this by sending forth the Gospel as a witness, for when this shall have been accomplished in all the world, then shall the end come.

3. By personal purity and spiritual holiness we can be ready for His coming. "What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" (2 Peter 3:11.) "Seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless" (v. 14). This is the personal preparation that He claims from each one of us. It calls for the utmost diligence and vigilance. The language is very suggestive: "That ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." Do not wait until the signal comes to get ready. Be ready. Be found of Him, not flurried and alarmed, but calm, waiting, ready and longing for His call.

4. "Account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation." That is, remember it means salvation to some that you love and that He loves, and some that He wants to have in that happy company. He is giving you another chance to bring them in. Let it be your loving and intense concern that none shall be left out, but that through the long eternity to come their heaven shall make your heaven complete.

5. Finally, the beautiful phrase, "Until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts" (2 Peter 1:19), suggests the inner revelation of Jesus Christ to His wait-

ing Bride through the Holy Ghost, as the deepest and dearest of all preparations for His coming. The day star before the day dawn. It means that inner whisper of the Master's own voice, that secret presence of His Spirit in the soul which will give intimation and intuition of His coming even before the world shall see Him. It is "Christ in you the hope of glory." O beloved, claim it, cherish it, and hearken to the whispered message, speaking tenderly, solemnly in these last days to those that are close enough to His heart to hear Him.

"Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Part II—THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

I THE LIFE

For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and declare unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us (1 John 1:2).

This is the true God, and eternal life (1 John 5:20).

COULD we compress into a single word all the voices of nature and redemption on Easter morning, that one word which would come throbbing from the full pulses of the spring, the flowers, the bursting buds, the songs of birds, the open grave of the risen Lord, and the overflowing hearts and thankful praises of rejoicing saints would be—LIFE.

And this one significant word is the keynote of the profoundest books in the New Testament, the Gospel and the Epistles of John. The others tell us of the truth and character and righteousness, but these tell us of life. The others tell us what to do and be, but these tell us the secret of what we may become and how we may accomplish the things set before us. The mystery of nature is life. The one thing short of which all man's wisdom and resources reach is life. Science can give us the principles of things and can even construct the forces of nature, but only God can give this strange and subtle thrill which sets all in spontaneous motion and gives it life.

The Sermon on the Mount tells us what an ideal life should be, but the Gospel of John tells us how that ideal may become a reality. It starts with the mysterious secret of the new birth where life begins, and it leads up to the

highest developments of the sanctified and glorified life in the age to come. The Epistles of John still more fully unfold the source, the evolution and the outflow of divine life. Let us follow it through five successive stages.

I. CHRIST IS THE ETERNAL LIFE

Before a planet rolled, an insect buzzed, or an angel sang, Christ was Himself the eternal life. Our text has in the original a stronger emphasis than the received version expresses, and it reads literally thus: "We show unto you that life, the eternal, which was with the Father and was manifested unto us." And so our second text more fully expresses the same thought, "This is the true God, and the life eternal." Jesus is the Life and from Him all life has come. The life of nature is the outflow of His creating power. The life of mind and thought and intellect is but a radiation from His infinite mind. The power that moves the universe from the mightiest sphere to the minutest spray is His personal life, for "By him all things consist," and "In him we live and move and have our being." The tint of the Easter lily, the fragrance of the hyacinth, the teeming life of the vegetable world all come from Him. The birth of every newborn soul is begotten of His life. The Church of every age and clime is the new creation of His life and power. The life of every saint is sustained every moment by the life of his living Head. It is so good therefore, to know that His life is life eternal and that in Him there is a fountain of life that never can run dry, a sufficiency that never can fail. The word "eternal" here does not merely convey the idea of existence that has neither beginning nor ending, but it lifts us into

a higher sphere of life. It is a kind of life that belongs to a loftier plane than the things that are seen and temporal. It is a life that is as infinite in its scope as it is enduring in its length; a great, unfathomable ocean of infinite fullness and glorious all-sufficiency. This Easter morning let us adore the Prince of Life, the Living One, the glorious Son of God who stands before us in His radiant and eternal life, proclaiming, "I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore."

II. THE LIFE MANIFESTED

"The life was manifested." This includes the whole story of the incarnation and earthly life of the Lord Jesus. This also covers the meaning of the phrase so often used by John in his Gospel and Epistle, "The Word of life." Here it is in the original, "The Word of the life." Just as a word is the expression of a human thought, so He is to us the expression of God's thought and will, the manifestation to us of what was already there, but unrevealed. Instead of giving us merely a written word He sends to us a living person to exhibit in the actual details of His earthly life the character of God, and His purposes of love to the human race. The story is a familiar one of the missionary who had failed to bring conviction to the savages of the Congo by years of preaching, at last stopped in the midst of a course of lessons on the Sermon on the Mount and announced to the Africans that he was going to live this chapter himself among them. Before the day was over they gave him ample opportunities of doing so by claiming all his worldly goods and he, unresistingly, gave "to him that asked and from him that would borrow

turned not away." At nightfall the missionary's wife was in dismay, for her home was stripped and starvation stared them in the face. But that was only the first act in the drama. Before the night was over the Negroes began to reflect upon the strange example they had witnessed. This man, they said, is not like the traders. He does not ask us for things, but he gives us all he has. He must be God's man, and we had better be careful how we treat him. And so the following day witnessed the scene of yesterday reversed and everything brought back with compound interest. This was the second act. The third act was a great revival, the conversion of a thousand souls, and the organization of the largest church on the Congo. "The life was manifested" and they saw it, and it was an object lesson more mighty than any words. So Christ has manifested in His life the message of the Father and the meaning of the Gospel. His earthly life was a complete pattern of all that God expects a true human life to be. For the first time in the history of the race the Father beheld a man of whom He could say, "In him I am well pleased." Christ's human life covered every side of our experience touching the physical and the spiritual and every earthly relationship that we are called to sustain. The life was manifested in every tint and shade and in every minute detail of a typical human experience so that there is no situation which can arise to which we may not apply the simple watchword, "What would Jesus do?" In our zeal for the great doctrines connected with His death, let us never deprecate the value of His life, and the importance of His perfect example, both as a revelation of God and as an ideal for humanity.

III. THE LIFE CRUCIFIED

While we must not undervalue the life of Christ, we cannot overestimate the significance of His death. There is a school of teachers who say much about Christian Socialism and the application of Christ's example to the practical details of all our social and secular questions. But these men stop short of Calvary and leave out of view that great event which is the key to all Scripture and all Christian hope and experience. And so we very soon come, even in this deeply spiritual epistle, to that expression which bids us pause with a hush of holy awe and tenderness—the blood. John has hardly got started in his letter before two deep crimson shades cover all the page, the one the dark stain of sin, the other the precious blood of Christ. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). This is the great fact back of Easter and the resurrection, the cross of Calvary, the death of Jesus Christ, the life so divine, so human, so beautiful, laid down in sacrifice and self-surrender, not only as an example of submission and resignation, teaching us how to die; but a ransom for the guilty and a satisfaction to the righteousness of God for the sins of men. With all his deep insight into the spirit and life of Jesus, John, above all the disciples, recognized the sacrificial meaning of His blood. "Behold the Lamb of God," seems to ring out as the undertone of all his beautiful Gospel. "The blood of Jesus Christ" is the background of his epistle. "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood," is the keynote of the oft-repeated redemption song of his sublime Apocalypse. The blood of Jesus Christ just means His life, with all

its infinite value given as a substitute and ransom for our forfeited life.

Now it is not enough for us to appreciate in a sentimental way the sufferings of our Lord, and weep in sympathy over His shame and agony—all this we may do over some pathetic story of human sorrows; all this we may do under the spell of moving eloquence, and yet know nothing of the power of Christ's blood. The death of Christ stands for a great and potential fact, and it is of no value to us until faith enters into partnership with Him in that fact, and knows by personal appropriation "the fellowship of his sufferings." The death of Christ simply means for me that when He died I died, and in God's view I am now as if I had been executed for my own sin and was now recognized as another person who has risen with Christ and is justified from his former sins because he has been executed for them, "For he that is dead is freed from sin." Not only so, it is the secret of my sanctification, for in that cross of Calvary, I, the sinful self, was put to death, and when I lay myself over with Him upon that cross, and reckon my self dead, Christ's risen life passes into me and it is no longer my struggling, my goodness or my badness, but my Lord who lives in me, and through whom, while I abide in Him, I am counted even as He and enabled to walk even as He walked.

Beloved, have you entered into the death of Christ and counted it yours, and through it are you now alive unto Him in "the power of His resurrection"?

IV. THE LIFE RISEN

It is just as wrong to stop at the cross as it is to stop before coming to the cross. It is just as wrong to have

merely a dead Christ as to eliminate the death of Christ from our theology. Christ's death is only the background for His resurrection. The life that was laid down was taken up again and now He stands before us saying, "I am he that liveth and was dead." It is not the cross with the Saviour hanging on it, but it is the cross on which He hung, but where He hangs no longer; the grave in which He lay, but open now, and the very gateway of life immortal. And so this passage is full of suggestions of the risen Lord. That which our hands handled of the Word of life brings back to us immediately the memory of the morning when He stood among them and said, "Handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have." There is something infinitely touching in language like this from the pen of John, for he had leaned upon the Master's breast, and doubtless he had proved the reality of his Master's resurrection and claimed once more the familiar place and touch of love.

And this leads us to notice that this expression, the blood of Christ, has a higher and a deeper meaning in connection with the resurrection, for "the blood is the life," and it is the life of Jesus Christ, His risen life as well as His atoning death which cleanses us from all sin. We are "saved by his life," quite as truly as by His death. In one of the ancient types of Exodus we read of an occasion when Moses having sacrificed certain bullocks at the foot of the mount and shed their blood upon the altar, took part of the blood in basins and sprinkled it upon the people, and took it up with him into the mount where they met with God and were accepted because of the blood. This second action of the blood seems to denote

the resurrection life of Christ, the life taken back again after it had been once laid down. And so this glad morning we celebrate the victory of our risen Lord and hail Him as the Prince of Life and the Living One, living now as the Conqueror of death, as the possessor of a new life, and as the Source and Head of that new life for all who are united to Him in His death and resurrection.

V. THE LIFE INDWELLING

For this life is not for Himself, but for us, and having risen from the dead He now comes to relive His life in us. This is the secret of sanctification as it is unfolded in the First Epistle of John, and it is the solution of every puzzling problem in connection with that epistle. Perhaps no portion of the New Testament has so many seeming contradictions on the subject of holiness as the First Epistle of John. For example, we are told in the first chapter, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us," and again, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." And yet a little later we are told with equal emphasis he that "is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Now how can these be reconciled? It is all very simple. First it is true that we; that is, the human we, have sin and have sinned. There is no good in us and we have renounced ourselves as worthless and helpless; but on the other hand, we have taken Him to be our life and His life is a sinless one. The seed that He plants in us, as spotless as that beautiful bulb and blossom which you plant in the unclean soil, but which

grows up as pure as an angel's wing unstained by the soil around it, belongs to another element and is in its own nature essentially and inherently pure.

The key to this whole mystery is supplied by two verses in this epistle. He that "abideth in him sinneth not" (1 John 3:6). Here is the secret of holiness, it is "not our holiness but Him." There is no account made here of our perfection, but it is only as we cling to Him and draw our life each moment from Him that we are kept from sin. It is the indwelling life.

Again, "Whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not" (1 John 5:18). Here again the same truth is expressed in a different way. The only begotten Son of God, dwelling in us, keeps us from the power of sin and the assaults of Satan; and although the devil often strikes yet we are like the little insect with the pane of glass between it and the bird of prey, "and that wicked one toucheth us not."

There is one more passage which belongs to this connection. "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5:12). Here it is our union with the person of the Lord Jesus that constitutes the source of our spiritual life. The secret therefore which Paul had found, "Christ in you the hope of glory," is the secret also of the disciple who leaned yet closer on the Master's breast. God grant that it may be the secret of our life, too, and that we may know in all of His fullness the life eternal, the life manifested, and the life crucified, the resurrection life, and the life indwelling, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

II

THE WALK

He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked (1 John 2:6).

THE life naturally leads to the walk. The term describes the course of life, the conduct, the practical side of our Christian life. The reference to the walk of our Lord Jesus Christ recalls His character and life. The character of Jesus stands out as the divinest monument of the Bible and the Gospels.

Even men who do not believe in Him as we do have been compelled to acknowledge the grandeur and loftiness of His incomparable life. Here are some of the testimonies that the world's illustrious thinkers have borne to Jesus of Nazareth. Renan says, "The Christ of the Gospels is the most beautiful Incarnation of God. His beauty is eternal; His reign shall never end." Goethe says, "There shines from a Gospels a sublimity through the person of Christ which only the divine could manifest." Rousseau writes, "Was He no more than man? What sweetness! What purity in His ways! What tender grace in His teaching! What loftiness in His maxims! What wisdom in His words! What delicacy in His touch! What an empire in the heart of His followers! Where is the man, where is the sage that could suffer and die without weakness or display? So grand, so inimitable is His character that the inventors of such a story would be more wonderful than the character which they portrayed." Carlyle says, "Jesus Christ is the divinest symbol. Higher

than this human thought can never go." Napoleon said, "I am a man, I understand men. These were all men. Jesus Christ was more than man. Our empire is built on force, His on love, and it will last when ours has passed away."

But if Jesus Christ thus appears at a distance to the minds that can only admire Him, how much more must He be to those who know Him as a personal Friend and who see Him in the light of love, for

The love of Jesus, what it is,
None but His loved ones know.

The character and life of Christ have a completeness of detail which no other Bible biography possesses. The story has been written out by many witnesses, and the portrait is reproduced in all its lineaments and features. He has traversed every stage of life from the cradle to the grave, and represented humanity in every condition and circumstance of temptation, trial and need, so that His example is equally suited to childhood, youth or manhood, to the humble and the poor, in life's lowliest path, or to the sovereign that sways the widest scepter, for He is at once the lowly Nazarene and the Lord of lords. He has felt the throb of every human affection. He has felt the pang of every human sorrow. He is the Son of man in the largest, broadest sense. Nay, His humanity is so complete that He represents the softer traits of womanhood as well as the virility and strength of manhood, and even the simplicity of a little child, so that there is no place in the experiences of life where we may not look back at this pattern life for light and help as we bring it into touch with our need and ask "What would Jesus do?"

God has set forth the life of Christ as our example and commanded us to imitate and reproduce Him in our lives. This is not an ideal picture to study as we would some paragon of art. It is a life to be lived and it is adapted to all the needs of our present existence. It is a plain life for a common people to copy, a type of humanity that we can take with us into the kitchen and the family room, into the workshop and the place of business, into the field where the farmer toils, and the orchard where the gardener prunes, and the place where the tempter assails, and even the lot where want and poverty press us with their burdens and their cares. This Christ is the Christ of every man who will receive Him as a Saviour and follow Him as an example and a master. "I have given you an example," He says, "that ye should do as I have done." He expects us to be like Him. Are you copying Him and being made conformable unto His image? There is but one pattern. For ages God "sought for a man and found none." At last God produced in humanity a perfect type, and since then God has been occupied in making other men according to this pattern. He is the one original. When Judson came to America the religious papers were comparing him to Paul and the early apostles, and Judson wrote expressing his grief and displeasure and saying, "I do not want to be like them. There is but one to copy, Jesus Himself. I want to plant my feet in His footprints and measure their shortcomings by His and His alone. He is the only copy. I want to be like Him." So let us seek to walk even as He walked.

The secret of a Christlike life lies partly in the deep longing for it. We grow like the ideals that we admire.

We reach unconsciously at last the things we aspire to. Ask God to give you a high conception of the character of Christ and an intense desire to be like Him and you will never rest until you reach your ideal. Let us look at this ideal.

I. THE MOTIVE OF HIS LIFE

The key to any character is to be found in its supreme motive, the great end which it is pursuing, the object for which it is living. You cannot understand conduct by merely looking at facts. You want to grasp the intent that lies back of these facts and incidents, and the supreme reason that controls these actions. When a great crime has been committed, the object of the detective is to establish a reason for it, then everything else can be made plain. The great object for which we are living will determine everything else, and explain many things which otherwise might seem inexplicable. When the ploughman starts out to make a straight furrow he needs two stakes. The nearer stake is not enough. He must keep in line with the farther one, the stake at the remotest end of the ridge, and as he keeps the two in line his course is straight. It is the final goal which determines our immediate actions, and if that is high enough, and strong enough, it will attract us like a heavenly magnet from all lesser and lower things, and hold us irresistibly to our heavenly pathway. The supreme motive of Christ's life was devotion to the will and glory of God. "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" this was the deep conviction even upon the heart of the child (Luke 2:49).

“My meat is to do the will of him that sent me” (John 4:34). “I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me” (John 5:30). “I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (John 6:38). This was the purpose of His maturer life. “I have glorified thee on the earth. I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do” (John 17:4). This was His joyful cry as He finished His course and handed back His commission to the Father who sent Him. Is this the supreme object of our life, and are we pressing on to it through good report and evil report, caring only for one thing, to please our Master, and have His approval at the last?

II. THE PRINCIPLE OF HIS LIFE

Every life can be summed up in some controlling principle. With some it is selfishness in the various forms of avarice, ambition, or pleasure. With others it is devotion to some favorite pursuit of art or literature or invention and discovery. With Jesus Christ the one principle of His life was love, and the law that He has left for us is the same simple and comprehensive law of love, including every form of duty in the one new commandment, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you” (John 13:34; 15:12). This is not the Old Testament law of love with self in the center, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” But this is a new commandment with Christ in the center, “that ye love one another, as I have loved you.” Love for His Father, love for His own, love for the sinful, love for His enemies,

this covered the whole life of Jesus Christ, and this will comprehend the length and breadth of life of His followers. This will simplify every question, solve every problem, and sweeten every duty into a delight. It will make our life, as His was, an embodiment of that beautiful ideal which the Holy Spirit has left us in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians: "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up. Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

III. THE RULE AND STANDARD OF HIS LIFE

Every life must have a standard by which it is regulated, and so Christ's life was molded by the Holy Scriptures. "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me" (Luke 24:44). It was necessary that Christ's life should fulfill the Scriptures and He could not die upon the cross until He had first lived out every word that had been written concerning Him. It is just as necessary that our lives should fulfill the Scriptures, and we have no right to let a single promise or command in this holy Book be a dead letter so far as we are concerned. God wants us while we live to prove in our own experience all things that have been written in this Book, and to bind the Bible in a new and living edition in the flesh and blood of our own lives.

IV. THE SOURCE OF HIS LIFE

Whence did He derive the strength for this supernatural and perfect example? Was it through His own inherent and essential deity? Or did He suspend during the days of His humiliation His own self-contained rights and powers, and live among us simply as a man, dependent for His support upon the same sources of strength that we enjoy? It would seem so. Listen to His own confession (John 5:19, 30; 6:57). "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do. . . . I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge. . . . As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." This seems to make it very plain that our Lord derived His daily strength from the same source as we may receive ours, by communion with God, by a life of dependence, faith and prayer, and by receiving and being ever filled with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Would we therefore walk even as He walked, let us receive the Holy Ghost as He did at His baptism. Let us constantly depend upon Him, and be filled with His presence. Let us live a life of unceasing prayer. Let us draw our strength each moment from Him as He did from the Father. Let our life for both soul and body be sustained by the in-breathing of His, so that it shall be true of us "In him we live and move and have our being." This was the Master's life and this may be ours. What an inspiration it is for us to know that He humbled Himself to the same place of dependence to which we stand, and that He will exalt us through His grave to the same victories which He won.

V. THE ACTIVITIES OF HIS LIFE

The life of Jesus Christ was a positive one. It was not all absorbed in self-contemplation and self-culture, but it went out in thoughtful benevolence to the world around Him. His brief biography as given by Peter is one of practical and holy activity. "He went about doing good." In His short life of three and a half years He traveled on foot over every portion of Galilee, Samaria, and Judea, incessantly preaching, teaching, and working with arduous toil. He was constantly thronged by the multitudes so that Luke tells us "there was not time so much as to eat." Once at the close of a busy day He was so weary that He fell asleep on the little ship amid the raging storm. Leaving His busy toil for a season of rest, still the multitudes pressed upon Him, and He could not be silent. After a Sabbath of incessant labor at Capernaum, we find Him next morning rising a great while before day that He might steal from His slumbers the time to pray. His life was one of ceaseless service, and even still on His ascension throne He is continually employed in ministries of active love. So He has said to us that we must copy Him. No consecrated Christian can be an idler or a drone. "As my Father hath sent me even so send I you." We are here as missionaries, every one of us with a commission, and a trust just as definite as the men we send to heathen lands. Let us find our work, and, like Him, "whatsoever our hand findeth to do, do it with our might."

VI. SEPARATION

The true measure of a man's worth is not always the number of his friends, but sometimes the number of his foes. Every man who lives in advance of his age is sure to be misunderstood and opposed, and often persecuted and sacrificed. The Lord Himself has said, "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you. Marvel not if the world hate you. If ye were of the world the world would love his own." Like Him, therefore, we must expect often to be unpopular, often to stand alone, even to be maligned, perhaps, to be utterly and falsely assailed and driven "without the camp" even of the religious world. Two things, however, let us not forget. First let us not be afraid to be unpopular, and secondly let us never be soured or embittered by it, but stand sweetly and triumphantly in the confidence of right, and our Master's approval.

VII. THE SUFFERING LIFE

No character is mature, no life has reached its coronation until it has passed through fire. And so the supreme test of Christ's example was suffering, and in all His sufferings He has, as the apostle Peter expressed, left "us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1 Peter 2:21). He suffered from the temptations of Satan for "he was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin," and in this He has called us to follow Him in suffering and victory, for "in that he hath suffered being tempted, he is able also to succor them that are tempted." He suffered from the wrongs of men, and in this He has left us an example of patience, gentleness, and forgiveness, for "When he was reviled, reviled not again; when he

suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." Never was He more glorious than in the hour of shame. Never was He more unselfish than in the moment when His own sorrows were crushing His heart. Never was He more victorious than when He bowed His head on the bitter cross and died for sinful men. He is the crowned sufferer of humanity, and He calls us to suffer with Him in sweetness, submission, and triumphant faith and love.

VIII. THE FINER TOUCHES OF HOLY CHARACTER

The perfection of character is to be found in the finer touches of temper and quality which easily escape the careless observer. It is in these that the character of Christ stands inimitably supreme. One of the finest portraits of His Spirit is given by Paul in the third chapter of Philippians as he tells us of His humility—He might have grasped at His divine rights, but voluntarily surrendered them, emptied Himself and gladly stooped to the lowest place (Phil. 2: 5-8). His unselfishness in dealing with the weak and the selfish is finely expressed in Romans 15: 1, 3, 7, "For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me." His gentleness and lowliness is finely expressed in His own words, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." The highest element of character is self-sacrifice, and here the Master stands forever in the front of all sacrifice and heroism. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man

came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Here we are taught what it means to walk even as He walked. It is the surrendered life. It is the life of self-sacrifice. So the apostle has finely expressed it in Ephesians 5:2, "Walk in love as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour." This is love, self-sacrifice, and this is to God as sweet as the fragrance of the gardens of Paradise. There was something in the spirit of Jesus, and there ought to be something in every consecrated life, which can only be expressed by the term sweetness. It is with reference to this that the apostle says in 2 Corinthians 2:15, "We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish." God give to us this heavenly sweetness that breathes from the heart of our indwelling Saviour.

The refinement of Jesus Christ is one of the most striking traits of His lovely character. Untrained in the schools of human culture, He was, notwithstanding, as every Christian ought to be, a perfect gentleman. His thoughtful consideration of others is often manifest in the incidental circumstances of His life. For example, when Simon Peter was distressed about the tribute money at Capernaum, and hesitating to speak to the Master about it, the Lord "prevented him"; i. e., anticipated his very thought, and sent him down to the lake to catch the fish with the coin in his mouth, and then added with fine tact, "That take, and pay for me and thee," assuming the responsibility of the debt first for Himself to save Peter's

sensitiveness. Still finer was His high courtesy toward the poor sinning woman whom the Pharisees had dragged before Him. Stooping down He evaded her glance lest she would be humiliated before them, and as though He heard them not He finally thrust a dart of holy sarcasm into their consciences which sent them swiftly like hounds from His presence, and only when they were gone did He look up in that trembling woman's face, and gently say: "Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more." So let us reflect the gentleness and courtesy of Christ, and not only by our lives but by our "manner of love" commend our Christianity and adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

There is one thing more in the spirit of the Master, which He would have us copy, and that is the spirit of gladness. While the Lord Jesus was never hilarious or unrestrained in the expression of His joy, yet He was uniformly cheerful, bright, and glad, and the heart in which He dwells should likewise be expressed in the shining face, the springing step, and the life of overflowing gladness. There is nothing more needed in a sad and sinful world than joyous Christians. There was nothing more touching in the Master's life than the fact that when His own heart was ready to break with the anticipation of the garden and the cross, He was saying to them, "Let not your heart be troubled. Let my joy remain in you and your joy be full." God help us to copy the gladness of Jesus, never to droop our colors in the dust, never to hang our harps upon the willows, never to lose our heavenly blessing or fail to "rejoice evermore."

IX. THE POWER OF HIS LIFE

But we must hasten to notice finally some of the positive elements of forcefulness and power in the life of Jesus. It is possible to be sweet and good and yet to be weak and unwise. This was not the character of Jesus. Never was gentleness more childlike, never was manhood more mighty and majestic. In every element of His character, in every action of His life, we see the strongest virility and we recognize continually that the Son of man was indeed a man in every sense of the word.

Intellectually His mind was clear and masterful. There is nothing finer in the story of His life than the calm, victorious way in which He answered and drove from His presence the keen-witted lawyers and scribes who hounded Him with their questions, and who were successfully humiliated and silenced before the jeering crowd until they were glad to escape from His presence, and after that no man durst ask Him any more questions. So majestic and impressive was His eloquence that the officers which were sent to arrest Him forgot all about their commission as they stood listening to His wonderful words, and went back to their angry masters to exclaim: "Never a man spake like this man." There was about Him a dignity which sometimes rose to such a height that we read on one occasion as He set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem, "As they beheld him they were amazed, and as they followed they were afraid." In the darkest hour of His agony He reached such a height of holy dignity that even Pilate gazed with admiration, and pointing to Him even amid all the symbols of shame and suffering, he cried: "Behold the man!" Even in His death He was

a conqueror, and in His resurrection and ascension He arose sublime above all the powers of death and hell.

In conclusion, how shall we walk like Him?

1. We must receive Him to walk in us for He hath said "I will dwell in them and walk in them."

2. We must study His life until the story is burned into our consciousness and impressed upon our heart.

3. We must constantly look upon the picture and apply it to every detail of our own conduct and so "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

4. Do not be discouraged when you meet with failure in yourself. Do not be afraid to look in the glass and see your own defects in contrast with His blameless life. It will incite you to higher things. Self-judgment is the very secret of progress and higher attainment.

5. Finally, let us ask the Holy Spirit, whose work it is to make Jesus real to us, to unveil the vision and imprint the copy upon our hearts and lives, and so shall we be "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

III

THE FATHER

I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father (1 John 2:13).

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God (1 John 3:1).

THE Fatherhood of God is one of the most misused and abused religious phrases of current literature.

The Bible recognizes no divine paternity apart from our relation to Jesus Christ. Indeed, the doctrine of God's Fatherhood of individual saints was even unknown to the Old Testament writers and saints. God was recognized as the Father of Israel as a nation, but no individual Hebrew ever dared to appropriate the name to himself. It is the special revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." It is He who has taught us to say "Our Father which art in heaven." No wonder, therefore, that it was received by His first disciples as a truth of the highest importance and regarded by them with wondering veneration. "Behold," exclaims even the beloved disciple who had grown familiar with the love of God. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." The exclamation in the original is in an unusual form and expressive of the strongest emphasis and the most profound admiration. No wonder that the Greenland chief when first he heard it exclaimed, "It is too great, rather let me kiss His feet." Let us look at this wonderful love.

I. WHAT THE DIVINE FATHERHOOD MEANS

1. God is not our Father by creation. He is our Creator, and the Creator of all things. But this is not Fatherhood. Speaking of the sparrows the Lord Jesus says, "Your heavenly Father feedeth them." But He is not their heavenly Father. Human beings by nature are not the children of God, but our Lord very plainly tells them that they are the children of the devil. "You are of your father, the devil." Men do not like this and so they try to change their pedigree in the church registers. But their names will not be found in the family record of the skies. The only children that God will ever recognize are those that have been born of the Holy Ghost through Jesus Christ.

2. We are not the children of God by a special act of adoption. Earthly families are sometimes increased by the addition of the foundling child, or the drawing up of legal papers by which a fatherless orphan is added by adoption to the family circle. This may be all very well as a theological discussion and diversion, but it never can satisfy a heaven-born soul. Nay, it is said with beautiful force in our second text not only that we are "called the sons of God," but in the revised version it is added "and we are."

3. We are the sons of God by the new birth. We have been begotten of the Father and quickened by the Holy Ghost into a divine life which makes us partakers of the very nature of God Himself. We have all heard of the little fellow who lost heart in his home and became reckless in his life because he had listened to the street boys who had told him he was only a little foundling. When at

last his mother learned the secret of his waywardness, and took him in her arms and reassured him, he looked up through his streaming tears and asked her again and again, "Am I really your very own boy? Did you born me?" It was a child's expression, but back of it was an instinct as deep and high as our eternal hope. Thank God that hope is not disappointed, for "as many as receive him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God. . . . which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

4. We are the sons of God through union with Jesus Christ. We are not only born into the family, but we are married into the family. We are not only children of second birth and a lower grade, but we are the first-born sons of God even as He, our elder Brother. In Oriental countries, and indeed in all the older social conditions of the world, the eldest son usually inherits a larger fortune and a higher dignity than his brothers, but by our union with Christ we all rise to the place of the elder Brother and the first-born ones. It was this that He meant when He taught us to say "Our Father which art in heaven," for the "our" consists of Christ Himself and His brethren. It was this that He meant when He hastened to say just after His resurrection, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." This is the meaning of that precious assurance, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Not only have we the legal status of sons, but we have the very heart and spirit of the Son of God Himself, feeling toward the Father the very same sentiments of confidence and

love that He felt, and entering in actual experience into the very spirit of His own Sonship. This is the scriptural doctrine of the Fatherhood of God. The divine family circle is not a mongrel crowd of promiscuous souls singing the heathen song:

Father of all in every age,
In every clime adored,
By saint, by savage, or by sage
Jehovah, Jove, or Lord.

Nay, it is a select and beautiful company of redeemed and called-out ones all bearing the likeness of the one blessed Head, and deriving their heavenly life from the very heart of Jesus Christ Himself. These are the children of God, and these He is not ashamed to call His brethren.

5. We are the children of God by the witness and seal of the Holy Spirit. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." He does this by imparting to us the divine consciousness of our union with Christ and the filial spirit which instinctively cries "Abba, Father." He does not bear witness to our spirit as one person would to another, but conjointly with our spirit by coming into it and breathing into us the feelings and sentiments of a loving, trusting, happy child. He gives us a filial heart. He makes us to feel at home in our Father's presence. He enables us to draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. He sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts, and He gives to us the simplicity, freedom, and holy affection of little children, so that we know we are the sons of God, and it is natural for us to love and trust our heavenly Father even

as it was for the Lord Jesus Himself. Such then is the meaning of sonship.

II. ITS PRIVILEGES AND BLESSINGS

1. It brings us the divine nature. It puts into us a new and higher life. This makes all our experience delightfully spontaneous and easy. We do not have to act against our nature, but according to our nature. There is something within us which causes us to walk in our Father's will and love to please and obey Him.

2. The peculiar love of the Father is one of the privileges of sonship. God has a love for the world which is very strong, but it is the love of compassion. It was strong enough to induce Him to send His only begotten Son to die for sinful men, but it is a very different love that He has for His children. This is the love of complacency. It is of this that it is written: "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." This is a love that is based on something in His own heart. The instinct of fatherhood and motherhood in us loves our children not because they are beautiful, dutiful or good, but because they are ours. We are bound to them. We cannot cease to be part of their life, and they cannot cease to belong to us. Our heart follows them in their sufferings and even in their sins. Their degradation is our dishonor. Their honor is our delight. Their pleasure is to us a double pleasure. So the Father loves His children. The measure of His love to us is His love to Christ. As He delights in the eternal Son so He delights in all His sons and daughters. Our Saviour's parting prayer was infinitely tender and sacred in that last utter-

ance in which He gives away to His beloved disciples the very love the Father had to Him, "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." Dear child of God, do you believe this? Do you realize it? Will you let it comfort you, consecrate you, and make it impossible for you henceforth either to doubt or grieve your Father's love?

3. Intimacy, access, and fellowship. The child has the freedom of the house. In the old wartime when no one else could get the President's ear there was one that could always get inside, and many a message did he carry unofficially to the Chief Magistrate of the country, and many a troubled heart obtained a hearing through that irregular boy. No official sentries and no door fastenings stood between him and his father's arms. And so we have access to the Father. We may draw near. We may abide in the secret place of the Most High and dwell under the shadow of the Almighty. We may have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. There is no moment when His ear is not open to our cry. There is no situation where we may not claim His presence. And even when our lips cease to pray, and our communion no longer expresses itself in articulate language, there is a silent fellowship of the filial heart upon the Father's breast, which is deeper and sweeter than even the words of prayer, where we may abide continually in the communion of the Holy Ghost.

4. The protection and provision of the Father's house. We are entitled as children to sit at the King's table and to enjoy His almighty care. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more

shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" And in the higher realm of spiritual blessings, "How much more shall he give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" To His own beloved children He says: "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." Have you ever come to some hard place in life and sat down and thought, If my father were only here, my earthly father, who was always so kind and helpful, and if he had the power to help me in this hour of need, there is nothing that he would not do for my relief? But God is my Father more truly than he. He loves me better and His power is unlimited, His resources are unbounded. Will He not, therefore, do for me all that my earthly father would if he were here? And your heart has become encouraged. Your faith has grown bolder and you have been able to take from God the supply of all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Why should it not be ever thus? Has He not said to us in the very earliest teachings of the Son of man, "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things? Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

5. The training of a child and the discipline and education of the family—this is one of the privileges of the sons of God. There comes a time in the life of the child when soft indulgence must give place to sterner discipline, and when the little one must learn the difference between right and wrong, self-will and obedience, indolence and duty. Sometimes the father's heart has to be sorely pained by the penalty that hurts him much more than it does his

child, but he loves too wisely to neglect the training of his child, and some day that child will bless his memory for a father's firm and faithful love. So God, our Father, sends us to the school of discipline, of suffering, of life's severe experience, of the Holy Spirit's faithful training. Therefore in the twelfth chapter of Hebrews we have seen that the word chastening literally means child training, and it is introduced as the highest proof of the Father's love, and although not now joyous, but often grievous, nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby. Let us trust our Father's faithful love even here, and when we cannot understand His hand let us always lie close to His heart and be like the child whom his father was about to strike with the rod of chastening, when with one bound the little fellow sprang into his father's arms where the rod could no longer reach him.

6. The inheritance of glory is the right and privilege of every child. "If children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." And therefore the children of God, like their elder Brother, are often hidden in the present world, and it is true as the apostle says, "Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

There is a day spoken of in the eighth chapter of Romans as the day of the manifestation of the sons of God. It is the day when they shall emerge from their obscurity, and when the King's children who have been

in disguise, going to school in the lowly places of trial and suffering, shall come forth into the light and appear in all the glory of their royal robes and everlasting crowns. Then it shall little matter what the world thought of us once, and how the heart ached and waited through the dark and trying hour. It shall be forgotten in a "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

And so as we enter into the full realization of all that our sonship means, duty and trial will become easy and light, and the song of hope will be heard above the sorrowful echoes of the vail of tears. Then it will be so easy to let the world go by and even to surrender our rights and often suffer our wrongs because of the joy set before us.

Just after the close of the Civil War, the army that had marched in triumph through Georgia under General Sherman was to be reviewed in one of our great cities and march in triumphal parade. The night before the parade General Sherman called General Howard to him and said: "You know, General, you were the head of one of the divisions that marched with me through Georgia, and you ought rightfully to ride at the head of your division in the parade tomorrow. But I find that through political influence a plan is being pressed to have the general who preceded you in the command represent the division, and as political pulls are sometimes stronger than personal rights, I hardly know how to meet the case." Very naturally General Howard replied, "I think I am entitled to represent my division, as it was I who led them to victory." "Yes," said General Sherman, "you are, but I believe you are a Christian, are you not? And I was won-

dering if Christian considerations might not lead you to make an exception and even to yield your rights for the sake of peace." "Oh," said good General Howard, "If it is a matter of Christian consideration, of course I yield, and he can have the place." "All right," said General Sherman, "I will so arrange, and will you please report to me tomorrow morning at nine o'clock and you shall ride with me at the head of the army."

Beloved, that is the way that the Father some day will make up for our disappointments and wrongs. Let us trust His everlasting love. Let us love Him as our Father. Let us be followers of God as dear children. Let us obey implicitly His commandments which are "for our good always," and let us go forth into good report or evil report, unmoved because He is ever whispering to us through the darkness or through the light, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love." "Son, thou art ever with me and all that I have is thine."

IV

THE ANOINTING

But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him (1 John 2:27).

AFTER the revelation of the Son and the Father, the person and work of the Holy Spirit naturally follows. This is presented under the significant symbols of the anointing.

I. THE ANOINTING OF JACOB

The first reference to the rite of anointing is in connection with the vision of Jacob in the twenty-eighth chapter of Genesis, where God first appeared to the lonely wayfarer in Bethel's cave as he slept on his stony pillow, and revealed to him the mystic ladder that reached from earth to heaven. When he woke from his wondrous sleep he realized that he had met with God, and his first act was to anoint the stone on which he had rested his head as a sacred shrine and enter into his first covenant with God. This anointing was a sign of dedication. He was setting apart his first sanctuary to God. It was a very imperfect consecration, full of doubts and fears. It was the first touch of the Holy Spirit in the awakening of the new life. And so it stands for the work of the Holy Ghost in calling the soul to God in the experience of conversion. There was the recognition of God and the consecration of service to Him. But there was the

accompaniment of much bondage and unbelief. "Surely the Lord is in this place," he cries, "and I knew it not;" but he adds with all the force of the old natural heart, "How dreadful is this place!" And then his consecration of the tenth to God is only Old Testament consecration, for the New Testament teaches us to give not a part, but the whole. But even this he accompanied with a doubtful if, "If the Lord will be with me, etc., then the Lord shall be my God." So the anointing first comes to us revealing God to the soul and calling us to yield ourselves to Him as our covenant God. But the heart still has its "ifs" and its "buts" and has much to learn before it is ready for the full anointing and indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

II. THE ANOINTING OF THE TABERNACLE

"And thou shalt take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle, and all that is therein, and shalt hallow it, and all the vessels thereof; and it shall be holy. . . . Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle" (Ex. 40:9, 34). We are now coming to the deeper meaning of this blessed anointing. The tabernacle here represents the consecration of our body and life to the Lord, and the anointing denotes the baptism and filling of the Holy Spirit.

This incident marked the beginning of the second year of the history of Israel. During the first year the Holy Spirit had been present with them through the cloud as it marched before and followed behind, or sometimes covered the brow of Mount Sinai. Now, however, after the tabernacle was anointed the cloud came down and entered into the sanctuary and took its permanent residence with-

in the Holy of Holies as the Shekinah that hovered between the cherubim. God was now residing in the midst of Israel. So we come to the second year of our spiritual record, and the Presence that has led us to Christ and guided us from a distance, now becomes resident in our inmost being, and the promise is fulfilled, "I will dwell in them and walk in them." Our body becomes the temple of the Holy Ghost and the anointing abideth in us.

All this was preceded by a series of acts of obedience and consecration. The preceding chapter tells in full detail of the successive steps that Moses took in finishing and setting apart the various sections of the tabernacle and its furniture. Again and again we read the phrase, "As the Lord commanded Moses, so did he," until at last it is added, "According to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so the children of Israel made all the work. And Moses did look upon all the work, and behold they had done it as the Lord had commanded, even so had they done it.

... So Moses finished the work." Then it was that the cloud descended and the Spirit came. So we shall find that there are steps of obedience and consecration to be taken, the heart and the life surrendered to God in every detail as the Lord has bidden, and when we have yielded our members and all our being completely, then the Holy Ghost comes down, and comes in, and makes the surrendered heart His dwelling place and His peculiar possession.

III. THE ANOINTING OF THE PRIESTHOOD

The next anointing of which we read is the anointing of the priesthood represented by Aaron and his sons.

"And he poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron's head, and anointed him, to sanctify him. . . . And Moses took of the anointing oil, and of the blood which was upon the altar, and sprinkled it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon his sons' garments with him; and sanctified Aaron, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him" (Lev. 8:12, 30).

Here the figure advances from the anointing of a building to the anointing of living persons, and still more perfectly represents the pouring of the Holy Spirit upon the consecrated believer.

For we are all recognized as a holy priesthood. Aaron represented the Great High Priest and his sons represent believers as the priests of God. Their anointing in conjunction with Him teaches us that we are baptized with the Holy Ghost in union with the Lord Jesus Christ. We share His priesthood and His anointing. Therefore the name Christ is given to Him, meaning the Anointed One, and the name Christian applied to us means anointed ones. The true Christian is one that has received the anointing of the Holy Ghost and is thus a *Christ one*.

In the thirtieth chapter of Exodus we have a very full account of the preparation of this anointing oil and its application. There were certain ingredients in it which were known, and certain which were unknown. Even so the person of Christ, the Anointed One, is not only human, and thus familiar to us in His human nature, but there is also the deep mystery of His deity. The anointing oil was to be separated from all other preparations as a holy anointing oil, and under the most solemn penalties all

counterfeits or imitations were prohibited. "Whosoever compoundeth any like it, or putteth any of it upon a stranger, shall even be cut off from his people" (Ex. 30: 33). It was carefully guarded from desecration by being applied to any improper object. "Upon man's flesh shall it not be poured," was the sacred restriction and prescription (Ex. 30: 32). And so the Holy Ghost is given only to the separated and consecrated life. He cannot be received by the carnal heart. He will only dwell with the holy. Nor may we imitate Him or counterfeit His blessed influences. Man's modern imitations of divine things He will not acknowledge. The operatic music, the eloquence born of mere emotion, the worship inspired by earthly feeling, the fervor that is wrought up by our feelings, the revival that is the product of human sensation and excitement—all these things are but human counterfeits and strange fire. But in contrast with them then there is a divine anointing, a sacred fire, a heavenly inspiration, a touch of the supernatural and divine that God will give to the holy heart and the consecrated life, and through which we may draw near in our heavenly priesthood and know the living power of God as truly as when His presence shone in the Shekinah flame and the pillar of fire. Have we received this divine anointing? And has it brought us nigh to God in fellowship and ministry, making us the priests of God and ministers of the heavenly sanctuary?

This ancient anointing was for service, and so all true ministry must begin with the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Without that baptism even Jesus would not presume to preach the message of His Father, and without it our ministry is a presumption and a failure. Only through

the Spirit's power can we perform any service which will be effectual to man or acceptable to God. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Peter 4:11).

IV. THE ANOINTING OF THE LEPER

In Leviticus 14:15-18 we find a new link in this chain of blessing. It is the lowest link attaching all the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost to the lowest and vilest sinner. The leper represents the full effects of the curse both upon the body and the spirit of the sinner, and his condition is one of utter helplessness and ruin. In this condition he is brought unto the priest, and the first steps in his salvation and restoration are connected with the atoning blood. The sacrifice of the two birds represents the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The sprinkled blood upon the right ear, the right thumb, and the right foot tell of the quickening life of the Lord Jesus. Then comes the anointing oil mingled with the blood, representing the power of the Holy Ghost applied in turn to the different members of our being, until at last when the right ear, the right thumb, and the right toe have been successively anointed, the rest of the oil, representing the fullness of the Spirit, is poured upon the head, and the whole being bathed in the Spirit's power. Here we see the fullness of the Spirit placed within reach of the vilest sinner, until step by step he rises from the depths of misery to the heights of grace and glory, and where sin abounded

grace does much more abound. This is an uttermost salvation. It saves from the uttermost to the uttermost. It is the only salvation large and full enough for lost humanity. Is there a poor leprous life reading these lines? Beloved, this anointing is for you, and if you will receive it the measure of your fall will become the measure of your restoration and your hope, and, "As sin hath reigned unto death, so shall grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

V. THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK

During the ministry of our Lord we are told that He sent forth His disciples not only to preach the Gospel, but also to heal the sick. And in closing the New Testament canon we find the apostle James, who was the head of the apostolic council at Jerusalem, and especially fitted to represent the ecclesiastical action of the New Testament Church, committing to the Church of the present dispensation the permanent ordinance of anointing for healing. "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up, and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." This was the divine prescription for sickness among the children of God in the Early Church, and it only fell into disuse when the spirit of faith disappeared through the entrance of worldliness and unbelief. The anointing here is evidently a religious and not a medical application. It is administered by an elder and in the name of the Lord, and it is not the anointing, but the prayer of faith that saves the sick, and

the Lord that raises him up. Nothing but the most strained and specious and plausible reasoning can turn aside the plain meaning of the passage, and construe it as a medical prescription. To attempt this is to handle the Word of God deceitfully and find an excuse for our unbelief and failure. In the present day God has too frequently fulfilled this promise to make it possible to deceive any longer the candid inquirer. But let it not be forgotten that divine healing, real and blessed as it is, is not a matter of mere rite or ceremony, or even intellectual faith, but the work of the Holy Spirit and connected with the divine anointing. It is nothing less than the life of Christ in our body, the very quickening of the divine Spirit in our mortal frame. We cannot come to Christ as they did in the days of His flesh, as a visible and material presence. We can only approach Him through the Holy Ghost and know Him as the Spirit reveals Him. Therefore a spiritual preparation is indispensable to receiving Him as our Healer. There is a double anointing. First the heart becomes the temple of the Holy Ghost, and then it becomes also true: "Know ye not that your body is the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" Beloved, have we received the physical anointing, of the divine Spirit? This will not only bring us healing from disease, but a higher type of physical life even in health. It unites us with the risen Lord and lifts every function and force into blessed fellowship with His risen life and power.

Such are some of the scriptural illustrations of the divine anointing. Turning from all figures of speech, which might be largely increased, it means simply this: that the

third person of the God-head who dwelt in the Lord Jesus during His earthly ministry, comes to dwell in us when we yield ourselves fully to His possession and control. He brings to the heart the revelation and realization of our union with the Lord Jesus. He quickens us with His life, comforts us with His love, and illuminates us with the vision of His person and the light of His truth. He makes the Word of God a living reality to our spiritual consciousness. He becomes to us the spirit of peace, joy, and rest. He teaches us to pray and inspires our communion with God. He gives us our messages and clothes them with power. He becomes to us the spirit of purity and holiness. He fills the heart with love, and the life with sweetness and beneficence. Even our very body He quickens with divine strength, lifts us above the power of disease, and makes us partakers of the risen life of our glorified Lord. He is our Guide and guards us from seducing spirits and from dangers seen and unseen, and the promise becomes true, "The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him."

Beloved, are we thus abiding and does the anointing so abide? Or have the channels become obstructed and is the divine life interrupted by some hidden cause? Let us watch and pray. Let us search and try our ways to turn again unto the Lord. And if our communion is interrupted, our peace is broken, our power is gone, our spiritual life waning and unsatisfactory, we may find, we surely shall find the cause if we will dare to be true.

Someone relates the fact that when the water supply in a certain public institution failed and an examination of

the premises was made, it was found that the water was all right in the reservoir and the main supply pipe, but that at the point where it connected with the house a great toad had gotten into the pipe, and feeding on the water as it flowed by, had grown so big that he had completely blocked the channel. Is it not sometimes true that some of the devil's brood have got into the channels of faith, obedience, and of communion, and while the living water is still flowing as freely as ever around us it cannot enter our heart or satisfy our being because the channels are clogged by worldliness or sin? Therefore with peculiar fitness in this chapter has the apostle warned us against the world and all its unholy lusts as the enemy of God and the great obstruction to the spiritual life of the believer. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." May His wisdom make us watchful and wise. "And now, little children, abide in him, that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

V

THE LOVE OF GOD

He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love (1 John 4:8).

IT WAS peculiarly appropriate that it should be given to John, the beloved disciple, to unfold the Father's love. It was in keeping with the principle which he himself has announced in this chapter, that as it takes sin to know sin, so it requires love to understand love. "He that loveth not knoweth not God." John was the disciple of love and therefore the revealer of love. In this passage he has given to us the seven great principles of divine love.

I. GOD IS LOVE

God is not justice. God is not wisdom. God is not power. God has all these attributes but none of them is great enough to constitute His essence. But love is His very nature and in love all other attributes find their completeness. Just as in the process of color printing all the cardinal colors when combined produce a perfect white; so when all the attributes of God meet they form the immaculate purity of divine love. Wisdom without love would be harsh. Justice without love would be severe. Power without love would be terrific. But love modifies, directs, and softens every one of them, and blends them into the beautiful harmony of the divine character.

We should, therefore, always recognize the love of God as His supreme purpose in everything He does. He al-

ways loves, and He loves all as much as it is possible under the circumstances for them to receive. And when His love cannot avail, even then His heart is full of sorrow and compassion and He gives them at least the love of pity if not of approval. This is made very plain and very pathetic in our Saviour's bitter tears over Jerusalem when they would not let Him save them; at least He would let them know that He loved them still. Perhaps it will be true in the last great day that the final remembrance which lost men will have of the Father's face and the Saviour's heart will be a look of infinite tenderness, and perhaps once more a flood of tears.

We should look at everything that comes to us in the light of love, and believe that God means it for good. This may not appear at first. Again as in the process of color printing, the first impression may be crimson and the dark tints may follow, one upon the other, but when the last color has been put on it will always result in the spotless white. So if God's providence has seemed so far to be strange and painful, wait a little longer. The process is not finished. Trust Him through every testing and when His work is finished, you, too, like Jacob, will be compelled to say, "He redeemed me from all evil," or, like Paul, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God."

II. CHRIST IS THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD'S LOVE

Had it been left for us to read the revelation of God upon the face of the earth and sky we could certainly have discerned two mighty words in letters of light and fire, God is. But there the sentence would have paused

and the universe waited for the next great word. The sunshine could have painted goodness there. The blossoms of the spring might have added richer tints to the same word. The joyous festival, the laughter and the song of youth—all these might have emphasized the same gracious inscription. But as we look and wait, lo, there comes the angry lightning, the wild tempest, the sinking vessel, the raging conflagration, the funeral procession, the deep, dark, lonely grave, and lo, the writing is blotted out, and instead we read, God is power, God is justice, God is mystery, and the heart falls back in helplessness and perplexity and cries, "Oh, that I knew where I might find him;" "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." But now another hand takes up the pencil and the brush and writes across the sky, the earth, the guilty conscience, the broken law, the gloomy grave, the very judgment seat, God is love.

So long as man is innocent, so long as the fact of sin does not intrude, nature reveals nothing but beneficence. But when we come up against the fact of disobedience to law and personal wrong on the part of the sinner, all this is changed. Nature has nothing but retribution and pain for the transgressor. It is just here that love comes in with its glorious triumph and finds a way by which even sin can be forgiven and sinners loved and saved by a holy God. The very scene where divine love most sublimely triumphs is the fall and the ruin of the human race, and the dark cloud of man's condemnation becomes the background on which Calvary and redemption have written in eternal lustre, "God is Love." Just as the Gulf stream flows northward through the cold Atlantic, warming its

waves into tropical mildness until at last it embraces in its bosom the icebergs of the pole and melts them in its embrace; so God's love was poured through the dark waters of time and met man's guilt in the embrace of its mighty sacrifice and melted it away. And so John adds, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. . . . And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world."

III. LOVE BEGETS LOVE

It is the love of God to us that calls forth our love to God. "We love him, because he first loved us" (v. 19). Here is the divine order of Christian morals and Christian holiness. Here is the essential distinction between law and grace. Here is the key to all true spiritual motives. We never can work up our love to God by trying or fearing. Only when we fully believe in His love to us will our love flow forth spontaneously in return. Therefore, redemption meets man with unconditional mercy, forgives him without his deserving it, and finds that as the fruit of forgiveness a new life and a responsive love flow from the ransomed soul and make every service and sacrifice a delight.

The proud English Queen tried in vain to break the spirit of her would-be assassin by threatening her with punishment, or even by asking her what she would do if she received a pardon. "Madam," said the haughty French

maiden, who had sought her life, "Grace with conditions is no grace at all." "Then," said the Queen, "I forgive you without conditions," and the girl fell at her feet and cried out with tears of gratitude, "Then I am your servant forever." But the unsought, unmerited love of God in Christ breaks down the sinner's heart. Well may he say as the Cornish miner is made to say in the old ballad:

There's a word that burns in my heart like a fire,
And will not let me be.
Jesus, the Son of God, who loved
And gave Himself for me.

IV. LOVE IS THE ORGAN BY WHICH WE KNOW LOVE

"He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. . . . No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." Our love is the alphabet by which we understand God's love. Hearts, therefore, that know little of love know but little of God. Therefore God has given us every human tie of love and affection as an organ of divine knowledge that through these we might rise to the comprehension of His greater love. I have known two hearts to receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost in the moment after they met after a long separation, and both bowed together at the throne of grace. As those two brothers mingled their tears and wept on each other's necks, the blessing for which their frigid hearts had been breaking for many years found right of way through the open channels of love, and poured in until the love of man overflowed into the mighty billows of the love of God.

On the other hand I have known a soul so ignorant

of human love that she could not comprehend at first what I meant when I told her of the love of God. She had been poor, neglected, abused, and wronged so long that her hand was against every man and every man's hand was against her. I found her in the outskirts of the city, one of our neglected poor, and tried to lead her to the knowledge of Jesus. But she looked up in my face and said "I do not understand you. Nobody ever loved me and I do not even know what love means." I went home that night to my proud and wealthy church and I told them I wanted them to make a poor sister understand the meaning of love. And so they began one by one to visit her, to give her little tokens of their interest and regard; until at last one day, months later, as I sat in her humble room, she looked up in my face and said with much feeling "Now I think I understand what love means, and can accept the love of God." Beloved, has God given to you earthly friends, earthly ties, earthly affections? They are stepping stones to Him. Have you ever felt a throb of pure heart love? That is just a taste of what it is to lie forever on His bosom and drink in His everlasting love. Do not rest in the human love as an end, but receive it and rise from it to the love of your Heavenly Friend. And as you receive His love you will better understand it, until at last your heart shall grow into all the depths and heights of heavenly love.

V. FAITH IS THE MEANS BY WHICH GOD'S LOVE IS REVEALED

So we read again "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us" (v. 16). We know the love

of God by believing it. But we cannot know it until we believe that it is for us. I remember visiting a sick man once in a yellow fever hospital. He was not prepared to meet the Lord and he told me he did not know how to become a Christian. I explained to him the Gospel and the way of faith. But he told me that he believed in the Gospel and always had believed it. I suggested that we take a verse as a specimen to see if he believed it. I took that verse in this epistle, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." I asked him if he believed it. Of course he did. "What do you believe?" "Why," he said, "I believe the blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse us from all sin." I told him that was not the verse and to read it correctly because the verse says "Cleanseth us." Then he tried again. "Well," he said, "I believe that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth all Christians from all sin." Still I held him to the words of the text, and insisted that it meant "us." "That is," I said, "you and me. Now, do you believe that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth you and me from all sin?" Then he saw that he did not believe the Bible as true for him, and before we parted he put the "us" in it and the "me" in it, and the light of faith and joy came into his heart so that which he believed first he came to know experimentally as a fact, in his own personal consciousness. Then he could say in the words of the text, "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us." Do not, therefore, wait to feel the love of God, but believe it on the testimony of His Word. Take it as for yourself. Tell Him so. Rise to the place of confidence, to the place of the disciple whom Jesus loves, and God will place you

where you dare to put yourself and make real to you every promise that you reckon true.

VI. LOVE LEADS TO CONFIDENCE

Just as in the beginning faith leads to love, so in the end love leads to higher faith, and brings to us the perfect confidence which this passage so beautifully describes, "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." There is a kind of faith that fights its way to the throne and claims its rights by a logical process. But there is a kind of faith that wins its way to the heart of God and takes its rights as a matter of course, because it knows that He is far more willing to give than we can be to receive. Therefore the prayer of love is the quickest to reach the ear of God, and the confidence and boldness of faith are only born of perfect love. There is a confidence that comes from holding fast to His Word. But there is a confidence that grows out of ten thousand cords of memory and blessing. Promises fulfilled, prayers answered, deliverances given, mercies as countless as the sand, weave themselves at length into a cable of a thousand strands that never can be broken. Or, like the great banyan tree of India, which first starts with a single root and trunk, but after a while sends down a hundred smaller trunks from the branches to take fresh root in the soil until its spreading arms are upheld by innumerable props that grow out of its very life. So the life that has been spent in the intimate fellow-

ship of God becomes so interlinked with Him by every memory and experience of blessing that all the power of earth and hell cannot separate it from His love or make it ever doubt His perfect faithfulness. This is the perfect love that casteth out fear and it is our privilege to abide in this love and rest under the shadow of His wings.

VII. THE LOVE OF GOD LEADS TO THE LOVE OF ONE ANOTHER

It cannot be confined within the limits of even religious selfishness, but it overflows in beneficence to our brethren and all mankind. Therefore the apostle reaches the great conclusion "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also" (vv. 20, 21). Divine love is therefore practical and leads to every Christian duty, sacrifice, and service for our brethren and for a suffering and sinning world. God has made us His representatives and His channels to reach humanity, and without us He cannot bring to them the blessings of the Gospel. It is not His fault that men and women are dying in sin, but it is ours. He has "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." But we have failed to supply the missing link between His love and their need, and we have hoarded to ourselves the grace that was meant for all and sufficient for all.

"How can you say your Father loves you?" a skeptic harshly asked of a little boy who had just testified in a

mission to the goodness of God in saving him, though he was clothed in rags and looked half starved. "If he loves you," said the critic, "why doesn't He tell somebody to send you clothes and feed your hunger and supply your need?" The little fellow looked at himself for a moment and colored with mortification. But in a moment he was himself again and looking up manfully, he said, "My Father does love, and perhaps He does tell somebody to help me, but somebody forgets." Was there ever a more truthful or touching reproof and appeal! Ah, beloved, if we loved we would not forget. This is just the essence of love that it remembers, and its sweetest tokens are the little acts of thoughtfulness that show that it was not indifferent or forgetful of the comfort and happiness of the object beloved. And so if we truly love as He loves we will remember, we will sacrifice, we will send or go or give to save a dying world.

VI

THE CONFIDENCE

This is the confidence that we have in him (1 John 5:14).

THE universe is held together by the one great law of gravitation. Society is held together by the one great law of confidence, in the family, the commercial world, and the larger circle of tribes and nations. The spiritual world is held together by the law of faith which binds man to God, and adjusts him to his fellow man, even as the law of gravitation binds the solar system and the larger universe.

The apostle John, whose great heart and divine intuition reached to the essential principles of things rather than mere outward forms, having unfolded already the great principles of life and love in this epistle, now leads us to the law of faith and the principle of confidence, which underlies all spiritual life and experience. Again and again we find in this epistle the expression "we know," and in the closing chapter it rises to the highest and most comprehensive range of spiritual truth and experience.

I. WE KNOW WE HAVE ETERNAL LIFE

"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life." No truth has become more pronounced and more practical and powerful for good in the Christian teaching of our day than this; that it is the privilege of every child of God to possess not only a hope of heaven, but a full assurance of his acceptance in Christ. Two

blessed facts enter into this assurance. First, we have eternal life, and second, we *know* we have it. Nothing less than this can satisfy an earnest soul. The more valuable an object is, the more necessary it is that our title to it should be sure. You are willing to purchase a bill of goods for fifty cents without a title of deed, but you would not purchase a house and lot at ten thousand dollars without a title guarantee. The foundation of this assurance is very clearly stated in this passage. It is not our personal consciousness, our happy feelings, our new experience or our better life. But it is a record that God hath given and that God requires us to believe. "This is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." The record is very simple and easy to be believed. It is not that we may have eternal life, but that God has already given it and laid it at the feet of every man who will receive it. The gift has been bestowed, the proffer has gone forth. God is committed to us and we have only to endorse the Word that He has given, put our name in the promise and claim the salvation as our own. Not only may we do this, but we are commanded to do it and very solemnly told that "he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." In His great love God has adjusted the offer of the Gospel to our intelligent nature. He has given us an understanding, a will, and a reasoning mind,

and He meets our intelligence with a simple business proposition offering to us the free gift of eternal life on the simple condition that we accept it and begin to count it our own. Then He reckons it to us according to our reckoning by faith. He puts us in the place we put ourselves, and the gift is ours for the taking. A man, therefore, may have eternal life just as simply and certainly as a citizen of the United States could have become the owner of a free grant of land in the great West by putting in his claim according to the offer of the government and settling upon the land as his own. As we read these lines, if the question is still unsettled, we may decide it now and receive the precious gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

But it is not all a matter of intellectual faith or decision of the will to believe. The moment we commit ourselves to God's Word, and count it true for us, God Himself, by the Holy Spirit, imparts to the soul a distinct sense of its acceptance and a conscious assurance of His peace and love. This is what is meant by the statement, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." In the very act of believing there comes to the soul a rest, a satisfaction, and a confidence born of the Holy Ghost and attesting the great fact which our faith has already claimed. There are two seals. First we must affix our seal to the simple document. "He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true." That is the seal of our faith. But now comes the second seal of the Holy Spirit's touch. "After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased pos-

session." Thus we may know that we have eternal life. Beloved, have we this confidence?

II. "WE KNOW THAT WE HAVE THE PETITIONS THAT WE DESIRED OF HIM"

Having settled the question of our salvation by faith we now go on to apply the same principle of faith to our whole Christian life, and we receive the answers to our prayers by the very same principle which enables us to take the first step. Indeed, a right faith at the start will be of infinite help to us all the way through, and a halting confidence for our salvation will make us halting Christians to the end of the chapter. The first thing required of us when we pray is that we ask according to His will. "This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us." We should spend more time in determining what to pray for than in pleading for it afterwards. His will is revealed in His Word, and every promised blessing within the covers of the Bible is a proper thing to ask and believe for. His will is very large and generous and covers all our needs of spirit, soul, and body.

Then, having asked according to His will, we are next to believe that we have the petitions that we desired of Him. This is according to the command of our Lord during His earthly ministry. "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." We may not have the actual thing for which we have prayed in tangible and visible possession, but we have the petition. His consent has been given. The request has been honored. The decree has been passed.

The blessing is on the way and the delivery will come in God's due time. We can afford to wait. We can afford to suffer. We can afford to be tested. We have His Word and we count the things that are not as though they were. This gives to prayer a definiteness and a force which are most satisfying. Without this our prayers are mere ventures, like the soap bubbles which a child may blow into air and they float away and disappear, and he never expects to see more than one in a score again. True prayer, like the echo, should come back to us, first in the shout of praise and then in the glad song of deliverance. This is the prayer that can help others and can call into action all the forces of omnipotence for the work of Christ and the salvation of men. This was the way Christ prayed. "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I know that thou hearest me always." And this is the way that Christ has bidden us to pray, for He hath said, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

III. WE KNOW THAT HE SANCTIFIES AND KEEPS US

"We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." Most of our spiritual failures arise from discouragement. We go out expecting to fall, and of course we fall. If we would but know that there is One within who is mightier than our weakness and stronger than all the strength of our foes, and that He is keeping us and will keep us, we should not fear and would not fall. It is confidence that keeps the soul.

This confidence, however, must be founded upon a right understanding of God's way of sanctification. First we must learn to distinguish between our new self and our old self. We must count the old life as wholly renounced, and refuse any more to fear or obey it. We must recognize ourselves as having a new life, born of God, and as free from sin as the rose is free from the soil or the sand that touches it, but cannot defile it; as the seafowl is free from the defiling strain of the miry waters in which it plunges; as the Son of God was free from the pollution of the world through which He passed with His immaculate holiness. Then we must learn that sin consists not in the temptation of the evil one or in the various moods and feelings which he may throw over our minds and hearts, but in the deliberate attitude of our will. The evil thoughts which Satan hurls upon us like fiery darts, are not our sins but his, unless we accept them and endorse them. We can throw them off as the rose washes off the dust of the highway, as the seafowl sheds the brine from its burnished wing, as the ship throws off the waves that threaten to submerge her. We can say to the tempter that these thoughts are yours, not mine. I refuse them. I am not defiled. I will not sin and I will not fear. God accepts our will as our real action and counts us victorious according to the fixed purpose of our hearts. Then we must also understand that sanctification is not our holiness, our self-perfection, our goodness, but, as so well expressed here, the keeping of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is in Him we stand, in Him we overcome, in Him we are perfect. So He that was begotten of God keepeth us and that wicked one toucheth us not. To know this is to be

armed with omnipotence and clothed with victory. Beloved, is this the confidence that we have in Him?

IV. WE KNOW HIM

This is the best of all. Our confidence is not merely in His Word, His answers to our prayers, His help in our conflicts, but in His own character and love as He has revealed Himself to us and taught us as the sum of all knowledge to know Him. And so the sublimest height of this whole epistle is reached at last. "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ." Higher than all blessings received, deeper than all truth revealed, back of all that He has said and all that He has done, is what He is Himself and what He is to us. But, before all this can become a fact and an experience, there must come to us a divine revelation and a divine understanding. And so the apostle tells us that He "hath given us an understanding, that we may know him." This is something the natural heart cannot know itself. This is something that genius and learning cannot find. This is something that eloquence cannot make plain. This is something that must come to us through the direct vision of the Holy Ghost, giving us a new conception, a divine intuition, a personal revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ in our very hearts.

Therefore, it comes to pass that many of the most gifted minds of earth are dark and blind with respect to the knowledge of God. To them He is but a name, a possible force, a remote and unreal fact. By all their searching they cannot find out God. Talk to them about the de-

lights of His presence and it is all to them as an unmeaning sound. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." There is nothing more sad than the helplessness of the human heart to reach the conception of God and to realize the presence of Christ. It is one of the most precious gifts of divine love. It is as new a sense in the soul as the instinct of a bird. And so on the other hand, there are souls that are illiterate and unrefined. But their whole being is alive with the spiritual sense. Christ is more real to them than any material thing. His presence is a fountain of perpetual joy. They live in a world of ever changing, ever fresh delight and their happy heart is a heaven below. God hath given them an understanding that they may know Him that is true, and they are in Him that is true, even in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Then there comes with this the deep delightful assurance that the soul has found at last the true, the real, the eternal. Everything else has disappointed us. Everything else has failed us. Everything else has proved transitory or false. But this is true. This satisfies the heart. This meets every intuition and longing of our nature. This fills the fullness of our being, and the transported heart sinks into infinite rest and sings with holy gladness,

Here rest, my long divided heart,
Fixed on this blissful centre, rest.

Somehow we know that this will never fail us, this will never change, this will never pass away. This will grow

deeper, sweeter, stronger, through all time and all eternity. This is truth. This is God. This is everlasting rest. Oh, the satisfaction that it brings to the poor tempest tossed heart after it has been buffeted by the billows of skepticism, by the storms of doubt, by the assaults of Satan and sin, by the disappointments of life, by the sorrows, sickness, and heartbreaks of this vale of tears. It has got home at last and it understands the sublime strains of the ancient song that first echoed on the plains of Paran, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations." Beloved, have you found Him that is true? Have you come to know Him? Have you received the revelation of His face, of His presence, of His love? Have you entered into His rest?

Perhaps as you read these lines your heart is chilled with a sense of loneliness and disappointment. Perhaps the very joy these words describe only makes you the more conscious of your strangeness to it all. Perhaps the very happiness of the hearts around you only depresses you with a deeper discouragement because it is all a blank to you. Listen! He is waiting to make this vision real to your heart. He is ready to give you this revelation of Himself. You have tried to think it out. Your religion has been too much in your head, your hands, your feet, what you are pleased to call your practical nature. There is something else in the human soul that needs to be educated and fed. It is the heart. It is the spiritual sense. It is that which feels and knows and loves. It was made for God, and God alone can awaken it and satisfy it. Ask Him to do so. Fall at His feet in helplessness, and yet in confidence say to Him, Lord, I beseech Thee show me

Thy glory, and upon you will open the vision of God, and to you will come the joyful testimony:

Thou hast bid me gaze upon Thee,
And Thy beauty fills my soul,
For by Thy transforming power,
Thou hast made me whole.

Simply trusting Thee, Lord Jesus,
I behold Thee as Thou art,
And Thy love so pure and changeless,
Satisfies my heart.

Ever lift Thy face upon me,
As I live and work for Thee;
Resting 'neath Thy smile, Lord Jesus,
Earth's dark shadows flee.

Brightness of my Father's glory,
Sunshine of my Father's face,
Keep me ever trusting, resting,
Fill me with Thy grace.

VII

THE CONFLICT

Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world (1 John 4:4).

THE picture which John has given us of divine life and love, has been so full of brightness that we have scarcely seen the shadows. The testimony with which he began his letter, that "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all," has given the keynote to the whole epistle. Yet back of the light and the love, there ever follows the shadow of evil. The very brightness of the light makes the shadow deeper and darker; and our study of His blessed message would not be complete unless we looked for a time at the shadow side, and then at the light which illumines it, and is able to "turn the very shadow of death into the morning." Or, to change the figure, back of all the notes of victory which ring through this epistle, there is the noise of battle, and the form of the conflict and the foe. Just as surely as the apostle sees the vision of his Almighty and all-victorious Lord, does he also behold the dark form of the wicked one and the legions of his hostile forces and our spiritual foes.

Six different adversaries are set forth in the First Epistle of John.

I. THE DEVIL

The devil is himself described as "that wicked one" (1 John 5:18, 19). "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. And we

know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." Certainly John had no skepticism about the existence and power of the devil, and no one who knows God will ever doubt the reality of Satan. It is the men who have never had their eyes open to behold the Father, who are still blind to the reality of the wicked one. The light reveals the shadow. Infernal wickedness always follows supernatural power and love. The period of Christ's earthly ministry was coincident with the outbreak of satanic evil, and the revelation of God in a human life always brings the experience of deep and fiery temptations. It is in the heavenly places that the spirits of wickedness fight their most desperate battles against the saints of God.

John's language here points out the devil in the most emphatic manner, as the very impersonation of all that is evil. "That wicked one" indicates a personality about whose identity there can be no mistake. There he stands, patent to all eyes, the embodiment of evil, the one who has no double, the prince of darkness, preëminence above all other things as the paragon of wickedness and the enemy of God and man. This world is still his throne, and the most helpless of his subjects and victims are those who least understand their master, and are so deceived that they even doubt his existence. He has blindfolded them with delusion, and bound them with the silken fetters of self-confidence and deceit, and as the Word of God describes it, they "are taken captive by him at his will."

II. FALSE SPIRITS

Satan has many emissaries and agents whom he sends forth to carry out his behests in the hearts and lives of

men. Therefore, the apostle warns his readers (4:1), "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." There are supernatural beings inhabiting the realms of evil, and permitted to have access to the hearts and minds of men. The origin of these beings, we do not know. A distinguished writer, who has become familiar with the subject of demonology by much contact with it, has suggested that they may be the spirits of a former human race before the fall of Adam. Of their existence there is no question. The hearts of men were filled with them in the days of Christ, and their casting out was one of His chief ministries.

There are two ways in which these evil spirits control men, directly and indirectly. Sometimes they take possession of men, dominate their will, driving them to insanity and self-destruction. This is actual demon possession in spite of the consent of the victim, and is one of the most distressing calamities that can come to a human soul. Then there is the indirect influence, which they seek to gain over the wills and hearts of men, deceiving, alluring, infatuating human hearts with their subtle wiles and leading them into sin. This form of spiritual influence is universal. It controls much of the literature of our age, much of the art and culture, nearly all of our popular amusements, and much of our philosophical teaching. These bright and seductive intelligences paint the vision of error and the fascination of pleasure in such attractive colors, that multitudes of human souls are beguiled like the mother of our race, and are following the course of this world,

"the prince of the powers of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."

The most portentous form of spiritual peril is in connection with the system known as Spiritualism. There is no doubt of the reality of these manifestations of their power, but they are certainly evil and of the devil. Many are drawn lightly and thoughtlessly by idle curiosity into the mysteries of Spiritualism, only to find that their souls have been scorched by its fearful sorceries, and only by the narrowest escape have they ever got back from the very brink of the lake of fire. Do not play with it even in its most simple and insinuating forms, as it comes to you, perhaps, as a parlor amusement in the form of table rapping, or through the ministrations of some clairvoyant medium, or in the more dangerous circle of the spiritual séance. It is sorcery. It is devil worship, and it is soul destroying. So also it comes in many forms of religious fanaticism through teachers, miracle workers, divine healers, so-called, and inward visions and revelations which are presented as the voice of God, and appeal to spiritual pride as a higher revelation, and an evidence of deeper light. The simple test of all these things is the Word of God, and the practical test of righteousness and holiness. Let us be prepared for false spirits and let us not fear to try them, for if God is giving us any message or revelation, He will always give us ample time to be quite sure that it is God.

III. FALSE PROPHETS AND ANTICHRIST

Besides the spirits of evil that come unseen, there are human spirits and prophets, who are also the emissaries

and agents of the wicked one. The apostle speaks of many antichrists, and particularly of some of whom he gives us the touchstone by which they may be tested. "As ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists" (2: 18). "Many false prophets are gone out into the world . . . every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world" (1: 3). The description here given fits so exactly the latest form of false religion, that one is almost forced to apply it. The very corner stone of Christian Science, so-called, is the point raised by John in this passage; namely, has Jesus Christ come in the flesh? Was the incarnation real? Did Christ have an actual human body? Is there such a thing as matter and a material body at all? All this Christian Science denies, and, of course, denies that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, thus constituting itself, by its own direct testimony, to be at least one of the antichrists of the last times. Indeed, it is a wonder how the intelligent American mind can be deceived by teachings so absurd, and so contradictory even to common sense, to say nothing of Scripture. And, indeed, it is not new. It is but a rehash of the old Sabellian heresy of apostolic times, and the idealism taught in England in the seventeenth century by David Hume and Bishop Berkely. At the time of Hume's death, his foolish philosophy was labeled by the inscription on his tombstone:

Within this circular idea,
Vulgarly called a tomb,
Impressions and ideas rest
Which constituted Hume.

Berkely had a still more serious setting down by a plain woman in his congregation, who one day found him lying in a ditch and begging to be helped out. Looking down upon her pastor with a smile of mischievous triumph, she cried, "So, Doctor, you've got into a real ditch at last." "Oh, no, Madam," said the doctor, as he tried to spit out the mud and keep himself afloat, still manfully sticking up for his principles, "I-I-I've got a painful idea that I've fallen into a ditch." This, alas, is but one of the fanaticisms abroad today, seeking to counterfeit the truth and mislead the simple. May the Holy Ghost give us that blessing so finely described in Philippians 1:9, 10, "That your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ."

IV. FALSE BRETHREN

Not only are we opposed by false teachers, but by unworthy fellow workers and brethren, who often prove untrue. "They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" (2:19). It would be harsh and serious for us to say that all who turned aside from the fellowship of the truth and the cause for which we are standing are false to God, and yet it is one of the trials of Christian work, that we often have to bear the painful severance of the bonds of fellow service that have held us in fellowship with former workers, and we have often to see the most sacred interests betrayed

by those that should have been most true. This should not distress us, but rather make us glad and thankful that we learned before it was too late that they were not of us. Better they should withdraw if they were not true, than to continue in a false position and do more harm from within than they can do without. No work can be injured from the outside if it is right and true within the heart, and in all the constituent elements that form its inmost centre.

V. THE WORLD

“This present evil world” is the next great adversary. “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever” (2:15-17). Here the apostle presents the world as a great trinity, or rather, antitrinity of evil as the counterfeit and rival of God. The three persons in this trinity are the lust of the flesh, representing the grosser forms of worldliness and animal indulgence; the lust of the eyes, representing the more refined and aesthetic tastes which find their gratification in earthly things; and the pride of life, expressing the loftier ambitions of the human mind for preëminence and power in the world of fashion, of commercial competition, of political prominence, of intellectual greatness, or even of ecclesiastical honor and influence. For every one of these varied forms of human desire the devil has a proffered prize.

But it is not the world that hurts us, but the love of the

world, or rather, the lust of the world. It is the thing in us that wants the world that does all the harm. It is the spark within the soul which kindles the conflagration. An angel might pass through all the beauty, brilliancy, and wealth of our world, and not feel one heart throb of attraction, because he had just left the dazzling glories of heaven, and was immediately to return. It is the earth hunger within us that makes us want the earth, and if this in any measure possesses us, it excludes the love of the Father and makes the smallest earthly thing an idol and a curse. The humble housewife setting her heart upon the paltry savings of a few hundred dollars, and miserly farmer, laying up in a long life of saving his paltry treasure of a few thousands, yes, the very minister of the Gospel building up a church for his own ambition, very much as the merchant is building up a business—these men may be just as worldly as the millionaire pursuing his larger prize, or the social queen seeking the worship of her more brilliant court of splendid admirers. It is very solemn that the last message of John, in this epistle is this: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." The idol is anything in our heart or life which takes the place of God. And this is just what the world does in the heart where it becomes the ruling motive, and thus the mammon of unrighteousness. Well may we heed the warning, and ask the Father's love to counteract the danger, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world."

VI. THE POWER OF SIN

The last and most terrible of all our foes is that subtle power which Satan injects into the soul, and which per-

verts every good and holy thing from a divine to a selfish and a wrong direction. It is sin. And so we read, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." "If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (1 John 1:8, 10).

The reality and malignity of sin are only fully appreciated by the soul that has learned the secret of deliverance from sin. It is only holiness that can rightly measure sin, and it is only the heart that has learned to know God, that fully knows the exceeding evil and bitterness of sin. Some forms of modern philosophy and religious teaching lightly ignore it, as they do a personal God; but it is only the deeper evidence of the power of sin in binding the minds of them that believe not. It is those who are dead that know not even that they are dead. It is the poison of sin in the human soul that gives the world its power to allure, and the devil his vantage ground to assail. Passing through an infected land with disease lurking in the air, if there be a scratch upon the skin, the poison is apt to be absorbed and the blood infected. But if the skin is whole the traveler passes unscathed. Sin has left its deep wound in the human soul, and everything becomes defiled by its subtle and malignant power. It is the worst of all our foes, but thank God it is the one evil with which divine grace and power have grappled first, and grappled victoriously. For the victory which this blessed epistle reveals, is the victory over sin as well as Satan, and the world, and we go into the battle from the very beginning with the blessed assurance, "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son cleaneth us from all sin."

VIII

THE VICTORY

Ye . . . have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world (1 John 4: 4).

WE enter this conflict with the prestige of victory. We meet the enemy as a conquered foe. This is the high standpoint of faith. This is the only ground where the child of God should meet temptation. Ye have overcome them!

The elements and resources of our victory are unfolded with as much fullness as the resources of the foes.

I. THE BATTLE IS THE LORD'S

“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil” (3:8). The battle is not ours but God's. Christ is the leader in the conflict. From the beginning it has ever been so. When the battle first began in Eden it was the seed of the woman that was to bruise the head of the serpent. And, ever since, God has recognized the great conflict between good and evil as a personal issue between the Prince of Darkness and the Son of God. When He came to earth as the captain of our salvation, He met the adversary in single combat and overthrew him once for all. And now He still comes to lead us in triumph and overcome for us and in us. Let us enter every conflict with the confidence that the Lord is fighting for us, and that we are simply following His banner and fighting His battle.

II. THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

The next element of victory and weapon of warfare is the blood of Christ. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1:7). "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony," must ever be the battle cry in the conflict between good and evil. Not by ethical principles, social culture, and moral example, do we overcome the forces of evil. The crimson banner of Calvary must lead the conflict and claim the victory. The great fact of sin must be recognized and met by atonement and sacrifice. The death of Christ must be reproduced in the death of the believer to self and sin. The old life of nature is not capable of reaching the divine ideal. It must die and be superseded by a heaven-born life, by the nature of God Himself, implanted in the soul through the resurrection life of Christ within. And so the blood of Christ, which signifies and sets forth the idea of sacrifice and crucifixion, as signally sets forth the idea of the new life imparted to us from the very life of our risen Lord. The blood is evermore the life, the life shed for us, the life breathed in us. And, as we enter into the deep, full meaning of the cross, sin loses its power, and Satan can not more reach us than he can reach the risen, ascended Lord Himself.

III. THE WORD OF GOD

God's Word is the weapon of our warfare. "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one" (2:14). It is through the Word of God that the power of the blood is applied to our soul. Believing

the Gospel we enter into the enjoyments of its blessings and come under the power of divine grace. It is the Word of God upon which faith rests its claims and from which it draws its comfort and inspiration to purify the heart and transform the life. It is the Word of God that detects the subtleties and snares of the devil's temptations, exposes the false spirits that have gone forth into the world, and enables us to overcome all the wiles of the wicked one. "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." It was by this weapon that Christ overcame in His threefold conflict with the enemy in the wilderness; and by it we are established in the truth and the Word of God abideth in us, that we shall overcome the wicked one and be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. As for him, the Psalmist could say, "By the words of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer." Beloved, are you armed with the Word of God? Is it for you the supreme test of truth and error, of right and wrong, the manna of your soul, the guide of your life, and the sword of the Spirit, before which Satan cannot stand?

IV. THE ANOINTING OF THE SPIRIT

This is our safeguard against the adversary. "These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, . . . and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him" (2:26, 27). It was the Holy Ghost that led Christ into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil and it is He that still guides and guards us in our spiritual conflicts. "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord

shall lift up a standard against him." The true antagonist of the spirit of evil is the spirit of good. As the devil is the counterfeit of the Holy Ghost, so the Holy Ghost is the conqueror of the devil. Good reason has he to dread his divine victor, and well may we take refuge under the guardian wing of the blessed Comforter, if we would be safe from the dragon's power. Just as the burnished covering on the plumage of the seafowl preserves it unstained as it plunges into the brine, so the anointing of the Holy Ghost protects us from the defiling touch of the serpent and carries us unspotted through all the pollution of a sinful world. Hence we are never safe until we receive the seal and anointing of the Holy Ghost. Do not go forth into the conflict without it. Having received the Lord Jesus as your Saviour, accept the Holy Spirit as your Keeper, Comforter and Guide, and learn to put Him between you and everything you meet. So shall He prove "a wall of fire round about, and . . . the glory in the midst," and sheltered beneath His feathers we shall ever sing:

I am safe from all danger
While under His wings.

V. THE DIVINE INDWELLING

"Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (4:4). The interior life is what is meant by this. To most Christians their religion is external. It is a matter of their convictions, their creed, their intellect. It consists in what they believe and know. It is theology, doctrine, and religious discussion. Or perhaps it is ceremony, churchgoing, rites, religious worship, singing, praying, and

performing acts of religious service, so-called. Or it may be more than this. It may have to deal chiefly with their conduct, their practical life from day to day, the things they do and say, or do not do or say; their acts of benevolence, their Christian work, service, so-called, for others, preaching, teaching, seeking to help and save. All this is good and has its place. But all this is external. The true secret of divine religion is this: "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I will dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." This is the home that God is seeking. "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit"; that is, in the depths of the human spirit, "for the Father seeketh such to worship him." God is only longing to find a welcome and a home in human hearts. He is standing at the door and knocking, and ever crying, "If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me." "If a man love me," the Lord Jesus has told us, "My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." It is when God thus comes to dwell within and undertakes to work out our life from the interior, that He is able to do "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us."

The great question therefore, is, Where do we meet God? Where does He reside? Is He for us a God in heaven, or the God in the heart? Is the throne of His omnipotence within the secret place of our being? Then, indeed, it is true, "Greater is he that is in you, than he

that is in the world." Enthroned in the depths of our being, God and our heart are in such perfect alliance that nothing can come between them. He is instead of every evil thing, every unholy presence, every threatening danger, nearer to us than our own very consciousness, a very present help in time of trouble. Beloved, have you learned the secret of the interior life? Have you become the temple of the Holy Ghost? Is God more real to you than the facts of your own consciousness and the operations of your own soul?

VI. FAITH IS THE VICTORY

"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (5:4.) It is through faith that we become united to the Son of God, that we become the subjects of the cleansing blood, that the truth becomes effectual in our lives, and the Word of God abideth in us, that the anointing is received, and the indwelling presence of the Holy Ghost is constantly and joyously realized. Faith is the spiritual sense which brings us into contact with the unseen and the divine. It is a sort of sixth sense opening to us a new world of external realities which others cannot see or know. Just as a man who has never had the sense of smell is ignorant of a whole world of sweetness, so a soul without faith can never come in contact with the divine realities of the world to come, and bring them to bear as a personal matter upon our life and conduct. Therefore faith unites us with divine omnipotence, and it is true, "All things are possible to him that believeth," as much as it is true that "All things are

possible with God." Therefore faith is represented by a military figure as the "shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." The shield covers the soldier so that the darts do not reach him. So faith hides behind the person of Christ, and all the blows fall upon Him.

There are two kinds of shields constantly referred to in the figurative language of the Bible. There is the buckler as well as the shield. The buckler is a shield which is so attached to the arm that it cannot be lost. It is fastened to the soldier. Through the thickest of the conflict he finds it still there, even should his fingers cease to grasp it. So there are two kinds of faith. There is our faith, which we may easily lose, and there is the faith of God, which holds and keeps us. This is one of the deepest secrets of the Christian life, that Christ within us becomes the power of an overwhelming faith. There is nothing more wonderful than that spirit of trust, which, through the darkness and the light, clings and fears not, but knows by an unspeakable instinct that He will not fail us, that He loves and leads and keeps, and will carry us through. Sometimes the thought comes to us, what if we should lose this trust; what if our confidence should fail! What if in some dark and dreadful hour we should be stricken with panic and sink in despair, and lose our confidence? This would be dark and terrible indeed! Perhaps we have come to such an hour. The writer once came to such an hour, and in the darkness of that dreadful moment, when Satan seemed to have destroyed by one fell blow, all his faith, he became afraid even to pray, and sinking in desolation he could only cry, "What shall I do? I cannot even

trust!" It was then that for the first time he learned the faith of God, for, as he sank in the depths of his desolation and helplessness, there stole over his heart such a strange, new sweetness, such a sense of God's love, God's arms, God's overshadowing presence, and a trust that could not die, that he looked up and loved, and leaned, and rested with a simplicity at which he could only wonder and weep, and say, "How blessed! How safe! How good God is! How wonderful His love, His trust, His presence!" And so, beloved, we must lose our faith to find His, and when we find it, we have something that Satan cannot steal, and that the world can neither give nor take away.

Therefore, it is against our faith that Satan hurls his fiercest darts. Therefore it is the "trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire." Therefore it was of Peter's faith that Jesus said: "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Therefore, we are exhorted in view of the devil's rage and hate, "whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." Therefore, again, we have the admonition: "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward." "The just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."

Lord, give us such a faith as this,
And then whate'er may come,
We'll taste even here the hallowed bliss,
Of our eternal home.

IX

THE MINISTRY OF LETTER WRITING

The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth. The elder unto the wellbeloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth (2 John 1; 3 John 1).

THE letters we write are a mirror at once of the character of the writer and the person addressed. We can usually form a fair picture of both lives from a confidential correspondence between two human friends. The best biographies in literature are largely made up of personal letters. And so the New Testament consists, to a great extent, of personal correspondence. The epistles were all written to churches or individuals, and had a direct and local coloring as well as a general application. Many of them, however, were written to single persons. Happy for us if all our letters were as wisely and nobly conceived, and as finely expressed. These two letters of the apostle John, form a necessary supplement to his first epistle, and bring home to our hearts some additional messages in the less conventional form and the more direct and personal channel of his private correspondence. The first of these letters is addressed to an honored sister in the primitive church, the mother of a family, and the intimate friend or relative of some Christian lady with whom John was at the time residing.

I

1. The first lesson we learn from this letter, and indeed from both, is the lesson of humility. John might have called himself an apostle, or the last of the apostles, as he

probably was at this time, and certainly the dearest to Christ of all the twelve. But he says nothing of all this, but modestly speaks of himself as one of the very humblest officers in the Church of Christ, just an elder. Surely, this is in fine contrast with the self-importance and lofty pretensions of ecclesiasticism through every age. When we find men announcing themselves by a long array of titles, and even in some cases with glaring fanaticism claiming to be the very apostles of the Lord to speak with the authority of divine inspiration, we may well lower our estimate in inverse proportion to their self-exaggeration. These claims belong to the school of Simon Magus and Lucifer, rather than the meek and lowly Jesus. Modesty will always be found to be the badge of merit, both in the literary and spiritual world.

2. The next lesson we learn, is a Christian friendship. John addresses this sister in the terms of the tenderest regard, and yet as a regard sacredly guarded. "Whom I love in the truth, . . . For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever." This is a love that is founded on spiritual bonds, and will be as lasting as the truth itself, which is eternal.

3. We have an example of a Christian family, for this sister had children and John especially refers to them that they were walking in the truth. And so it is the privilege of the child of God to claim the same salvation for his family as for himself. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." And yet not all her children were saved, for the expression here is, "I found of thy children walking in the truth"; that is, I found many of thy children, but there were still some lost

lambs even in this fold; that no doubt, a mother's faith and an apostle's faith were gently and patiently bringing in.

4. An example of a true Christian life. Two things especially enter into it, practical obedience and holy aspiration. Christian life is first of all obedience to God. For "this is love, that we walk after his commandments. . . . That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it" (v. 6). But it is not all plod. There is a lofty plane of noble ambition and a great reward to win. And so he adds: "Look to yourselves that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward." There is a prize to be obtained, and a constant vigilance and courage are essential to the victory, and the final recompense.

5. We are specially taught here our attitude toward error and evil. The Antichrist is described in almost the same terms as we noted in the first epistle, and all who bring false doctrine are to be avoided and renounced so distinctly that we can have no complicity with their errors nor responsibility for their evil courses. This is a most emphatic and needed prohibition. "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not in your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." We cannot be partners in error. We cannot coöperate with those with whom we are not of one accord. It is not enough merely to love the Lord, but we must hate evil. We cannot say God bless you to every person with whom we talk or pray. We are to lay hold suddenly on no man nor to be partakers of other men's sins. But we must always take such a stand in gentleness and love.

II

The second letter was addressed to the well-known disciple of whom we read elsewhere in the New Testament, that he was the companion of Paul, and the host of the Church of God. He was probably a man of sufficient means to be at least independent, and to be able to do much to help the brethren. It is needless to dwell on the many beautiful points in this letter which are identical with the previous one. There is the same spirit of personal love, Christian fellowship, and beautiful modesty. But there are five distinctive and important points.

1. We have the apostle's views upon divine healing, and temporal blessing, in answer to prayer, very fully brought out in the second verse. Literally translated it is, "Beloved, I pray above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." This is very strong language and yet very safe. He does not put divine healing and outward blessing above spiritual things, but he makes them conditional upon our spiritual state. He prays for his friend that he may prosper and be in health just as much as his soul prospers. The word prosper, here, denotes more than mere sanctity and soundness. It expresses rather a condition of spiritual fullness, and rich and abundant blessing, and it implies that we cannot expect the Lord's blessing upon our bodies and our business, if we cherish in our hearts those spiritual conditions which bring divine chastening and produce misery and pain. When the heart is overflowing with the love of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, then the blessing will reach every fiber and extremity of our mortal frame, and the providence of God will cover our temporal interest,

protecting and providing for all our conditions and needs. Let us not, therefore, hesitate in the face of this bold announcement to come to our heavenly Father as freely for our temporal needs as for our spiritual conditions, for, He "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." The inworking will always bring the outworking.

2. We have a fine testimony to a faithful life. "Beloved, thou dost faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers." It is not a brilliant life, but it is a faithful one. He is true to every obligation, trust, and relationship. He is a faithful servant to his Master. This is not only true of his Christian relationships, but in his dealings with strangers and the world outside. What a world this would become if this were always true of every disciple of Christ. Here is a pattern for you business men. You may never be great, brilliant, nor marvelously useful, but you can be faithful, and we know that in the great day when the rewards shall be given, the commendation will be not for our services or our talents, but "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

3. We have the picture of a missionary at home. "Which have borne witness to thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well. Because that for his name's sake they went forth taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth." Here we have a fine example of a Christian layman, who cannot himself go forth to preach the Gospel to the heathen, living and working to

send others, and like good old Gaius bring them forward on their journey after a godly sort. Perhaps Gaius did it by his hospitality, and his personal gifts as they visited him on their way. We can do it through the organized missionary movements of our time, as well as the individual opportunities afforded us in the providence of God. It was stated by one of our most successful missionary workers, that many hundreds of the missionaries of the Presbyterian and American Boards, now in the field, were supported either by individual congregations or single persons at home. It was added that the number of churches and individuals, who might easily assume the support of a missionary, might be extended to the thousands and tens of thousands, and thus the number of missionaries on the field multiplied many times over. At a session of the Ecumenical Council, it was stated by the president and others in the great meeting of laymen, that if the business men of this country would supply the means, the number of missionaries sent forth to the heathen fields could easily be doubled, or even still more largely multiplied within a very short time, as there were thousands of earnest young lives ready to go out but were depressed and discouraged by the constant cry of retrenchment, and the lack of financial resources on the part of the missionary societies. Let us pray, let us plead, let us labor until the Church of Jesus Christ awakens to realize the responsibility of those in the home land, whom God has raised up in order that we may be trustees of His bounty, and His grace to our perishing fellow men.

4. We have a picture of the true foreign missionary. "For his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of

the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth." Here is the true missionary motive, "for his name's sake." Nothing less than love to Christ, and a sense of His supreme call, can ever sustain a successful missionary life. "Taking nothing of the Gentiles." This is the spirit of true missionary self-sacrifice. The most difficult task of the missionary is to convince the heathen that he is disinterested. They cannot really believe that anybody can love them well enough to leave home and country, and every prospect of earthly gain and pleasure, simply for the purpose of teaching and helping them, and when at last they become convinced of the sincerity and unselfishness of the messenger, they accept the message and they become themselves the most beautiful examples of self-sacrifice and devotion. In China, to which today, the eyes of the world are turned with the deepest concern, almost every heathen mind believes that our missionaries have some ulterior motive, and are seeking to make something out of them, and this is the real secret of the anti-foreign prejudice, and the wild stories that are everywhere circulated about our missionaries, digging out the eyes of babies to make medicine, and discovering gold by a process of second sight behind every rock and river bed. The answer to all this must be an unselfish life, and a spirit of devotion, such as is exhibited today in that dark land, which is ready to give all, even life itself, for the sake of the people that do not even appreciate their love. It is very sad, when missionaries use their opportunities to promote their selfish interest and aggrandisement, and it seems most unfortunate when they allow themselves to be tempted to go into the service of the

wealthy natives for the sake of large emoluments. Nothing can repay the loss of influence sustained by a surrender of independence, and the suspicion of any sordid or selfish motive. But the self-sacrifice of the missionary should not be confined to him but shared by the missionary at home, who stands behind him, and by self-sacrifice in living and giving, carries out the apostle's exhortation "We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow Helpers to the truth."

5. We have one more picture in this letter; namely, a backsliding church. Already the spirit of declension, that afterwards culminated in the great apostasy, had entered the primitive churches. Paul tells us that "All they that were in Asia" had turned away from him, and now John makes the still more painful confession "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preëminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbidden them that would, and casteth them out of the church." It was out of this spirit of ecclesiastical ambition and pride, contending for preëminence and earthly honor, that the Romanish apostasy first arose, and the same cause is destroying the purity and separation of many in the Church today. We must not blame the pulpit for it all, although it takes its most hideous form in ministerial pretensions, high sounding titles and selfishness and luxury on the part of the preachers of the Gospel. The spirit of the pew will soon be reproduced in the pulpit.

And why should there be a severer standard for one than for the other. If the church warden, the official steward, the wealthy trustee, and the fashionable parishioner insist upon going to the opera and taking part in the dance and the card party, do not be surprised if the General Conference shall itself some day begin to talk about modifying the Book of Discipline, and make it easier for the people to live up to the advanced spirit of our cultured age. It is said that a minister who had grown tired of preaching against all these things, at last thought he would give his people an object lesson in worldliness, and so he announced one day, that the prayer meeting would be omitted that week, as the pastor and his family had a prior engagement at the opera. The following week he begged to be excused from Board meeting of the Trustees, as his wife and he had to entertain a card party. Before the third announcement could be made, however, the Church Board had been called, and that preacher tried and deposed from the ministry for conduct unbecoming a preacher of the Gospel. It was in vain that he pleaded that he was only doing what his people did. They could not see the rightness of it when presented in such a striking object lesson. But his logic was sound, and the lesson, if ineffectual, was at least consistent. The spirit of selfishness and worldliness, which is sapping the vitals of modern Christianity, is but the outgrowth of a lower standard of Christian living, and the demand of the people for a liberty which would shock and disgust them, if they saw it carried out to its legitimate fruit on the part of those to whom they look up as examples of true Christianity. It is very seldom to find

that even as early as the days of John, the doors of the Church were shut against true spiritual testimony. Let us not be surprised if we often find that we must stand alone. But it is blessed to be in the minority with John the Beloved, Paul the Apostle, and Jesus the ascended Lord.

Part III—THE EPISTLE OF JUDE

THE EPISTLE OF JUDE

THIS little epistle of twenty-two verses and less than seven hundred words is replete with the most solemn warnings and the loftiest spiritual lessons, conveyed with a vigor and vividness worthy of comparison with some of the finest visions of the old prophets, such as Jeremiah, Hosea, and Zephaniah.

Its author is Jude, referred to in the fourteenth chapter of John as "not Iscariot," and describing himself here as "Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, the brother of James." The James to whom he refers as his brother is the author of the Epistle of James, and was one of the three most prominent apostles, and associated with Peter and John in many of the important scenes in the life of our Lord. He was the presiding officer in the church at Jerusalem, and represented in a special way the Hebrew element in the early Christian Church. He was also the presiding officer of the council at Jerusalem described in the fifteenth chapter of Acts. He and Jude both were literal brothers of the Lord Jesus, afterwards born of the same mother. But their earthly relationship was completely dropped and forgotten in the higher bond of the heavenly Master and the earthly disciple.

The epistle is addressed "to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called." If this language be too strong to apply to all

Christians literally, it is well to remember that the Lord assumes that all the disciples of Christ are living up to their true standard. He speaks of them all, therefore, as "sanctified," "preserved," and "called," because all ought to be conformed to this divine standard.

To be truly sanctified is not merely to be chosen and set apart as the people of God, but to be self-surrendered and wholly dedicated to Christ, and then really filled with the Holy Spirit, cleansed from sin, and conformed to the character of Jesus Christ.

But even after this experience we still need to be "preserved." No blessing takes us out of the sphere of temptation, and the Christian's attitude is one of abiding and being "preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The expression "called" has reference, we believe, not so much to a spiritual experience as to the divine purpose in each life, and the special ministry and service which God has for each of His children, to which we are called as the servants of Christ, and for which we are specially enabled by the enduement of the Holy Ghost.

Then follows the writer's salutation: "Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied." "Mercy" is the divine fountain of all our blessings. "Peace" is the stream that flows from that fountain. "Love" is the expression of divine fellowship toward all His redeemed children.

After this introduction the epistle naturally divides itself into the following sections:

I. Certain reference to salvation and the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ (verse 3).

II. Warnings against false brethren who had crept in

among them and were exercising a baneful influence in the Church of God (verses 4-13).

III. A remarkable announcement of the Lord's second coming, quoted from Enoch (verses 14-16), coupled with warnings (verses 17-19).

IV. A beautiful exhortation to the true followers of the Lord Jesus Christ (verses 20, 21).

V. Counsels about Christian service and soul-winning (verses 22, 23).

VI. A glorious doxology (verses 24, 25).

I. "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (verse 3).

In this remarkable passage two phrases of striking significance are used. First, he speaks of the "common salvation." By that he means the salvation which belongs alike to Jew and Gentile and is offered to every sinner on equal terms. Its watchword is, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Next, he uses the still more striking expression, "The faith which was once [for all] delivered unto the saints." This is the meaning of the Greek word translated "once." The writer's idea is that God's word of salvation has been proclaimed once as His final word, and as the one Gospel that He ever will offer to lost men. It is here described not so much as a system of truth, but rather as a faith, something to be believed. The Gospel is not a theory but a faith. There is nothing in the Gospel of the nature of theory, philosophy, and speculation. Every word is given for faith to claim, and

for love to obey. And so it is called "the faith" rather than "the creed." Beloved, have we added our faith to this Word of God, and are we standing first *upon* and then standing *for* this faith "once for all delivered unto the saints"?

Jude reminds them that they must "earnestly contend" for this faith. The enemy will try to destroy it, either by discrediting the Word of God, or by keeping us from fully believing it. The apostle, therefore, means that "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" should be preserved in its integrity. There is no new Bible for modern times, and there is no part of the old Bible that is obsolete. Are we believing and living every bit of it and proving in our lives that Jesus Christ and His Word are "the same yesterday, and today, and forever"?

II. Jude now proceeds to expose certain false brethren, whose pernicious influence is already defiling and subverting the Church. Peter had warned his readers that in the last days such mockers should come, and perhaps Jude is referring to Peter when he says, "But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts." The book of Jude was evidently written after Peter, and the things which that apostle had intimated, had already come. Briefly summed up, the false teachers against whom he directs the larger portion of his epistle, were as follows:

1. Certain men had crept in unawares, and, through their personal and pernicious influence, error and sin were being communicated and circulated. The false seed con-

sists not merely in false doctrine, but in living embodiments of it. It is error in an ungodly and wicked man, which is Satan's choicest instrument of attack upon Christianity, and the adversary is always trying to sow these tares in the Lord's husbandry.

2. The particular character of their false teaching was "turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness." They abused the doctrine of divine grace by proclaiming liberty to sin because of Christ's salvation. They especially encouraged and practiced the sin of moral uncleanness. Jude speaks of them again in the eighth verse as "filthy dreamers" who "defile the flesh"; and in the sixteenth verse as "walking after their own lusts." In the tenth verse he uses still more realistic language in describing their coarse and brutal depravity: "What they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves."

3. The result of their teaching and their lives is "denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." Elsewhere in the Scriptures we are reminded that men may confess Christ by their lips, but by their works deny Him.

4. These wicked men were also intolerant of all spiritual authority, self-willed, and scornful of the restraints and the warnings of those that were over them in the Lord. They "despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities." Already, in the time of Paul, such men had risen, setting at naught his apostolic authority, ridiculing his peculiarities and infirmities, and claiming for themselves the highest spiritual authority as equally inspired and authorized to teach and command.

These false teachers were schismatics and tried to break up the peace and harmony of the Church. "These be they

who separate themselves." They claimed a higher sanctity and larger liberty and a loftier experience.

5. But Jude declares they were "sensual, having not the Spirit." Now this is an unfortunate translation. The word translated "sensual" literally means "psychical." That is the favorite word of our modern new theologists. They claim to be psychical. They mean some higher, finer quality of ethical and spiritual life. But Jude says they did not have the Holy Spirit, but merely a human spirit. They were what might be called "soulish people." We find this type among Christian Scientists, Spiritualists, and Theosophists. It is a Satanic imitation and counterfeit of the Holy Ghost. It is the devil's spirituality and not the Lord's.

6. Jude next proceeds to emphasize his warnings against these teachers by a threefold reference to God's judgments in the past, against those guilty of such errors and crimes. "I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."

First, he reminds them of God's judgments upon His own people Israel even after He saved them from the land of Egypt, when they fell into sin in the wilderness, as they

did on several occasions through the weakness of Aaron and the wickedness of Balaam.

Secondly, he recalls the doom of those "angels which kept not their estate," but fell into sin. The nature of their sin has been the subject of much controversy, some even alleging that they were guilty of impure and literal connection with human beings, and that it was through such vile intercourse between demons and the daughters of men in the days of Noah that the giants of that age were born, and the earth was filled with violence and sin. There is no need, however, that we should go beyond the simple statement of Jude and other Scriptures. We may simply apply this to the fall of those beings who once were holy angels, but now are demons, doomed to everlasting judgment.

Thirdly, he tells them of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the special reason for that fearful retribution; namely, the defiling of their own bodies both in natural and unnatural sins of the flesh.

7. Next, Jude gives us three types of these wicked men in the eleventh verse: "Woe unto them; for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core."

The first of these types is Cain, who represents the unbelieving man, the man who rejects the blood, and who presumes to approach God in his own righteousness. This is the type that is growing so common today, the men who reject the cross, dishonor the blood, and go about to establish their own righteousness.

Balaam is the second type. Balaam represents the world, especially the attempt on the part of the followers

of God to compromise with the world. This, too, alas, is the almost universal type of the worldly church of today.

The third type is Core (Korah) who rose up in rebellion against the authority of Moses and claimed for himself and his brethren an equal right to receive and proclaim the will of God. This is our blatant new theology, claiming that the gifted intellects of our time are just as true prophets of God as Isaiah, Paul, and John.

8. Finally, Jude reaches his climax in a series of magnificent and awful metaphors, whose fiery eloquence it would be difficult to translate into ordinary speech. "These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever."

Briefly summed up, these lurid sentences imply that these wicked men, with cool and insolent assurance, were making themselves perfectly at home in the love feasts of the Church, and presuming to make these sacred feasts occasions for their own gluttony and indulgence. The apostle compares them to empty clouds at the sport of every wind; showy trees whose luxuriant foliage bears no fruit; rolling waves of the sea frothing with the foam of their own wickedness; falling meteors which blaze out for a moment in the sky of night and then disappear in the darkness forever. God save us from any partnership with such awful examples of ungodliness, wickedness, and pre-

sumption. But let us not forget that the picture belongs to the last days, and that the last days are upon us.

III. "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

In an old apocryphal book called the Book of Enoch, we have this prophecy almost word for word. Whether the Book of Enoch has any real authority or not, no doubt the prophecy was really given and divinely revealed to Jude. He notes particularly the fact that Enoch was the seventh from Adam, as though it had some typical significance. Did it mean that in Enoch the race reached its perfect development, seven being the number of perfection? Certainly Enoch's prophecy is one of the most complete and striking revelations of the Lord's coming to be found in the Holy Scriptures. And as certainly Enoch himself was made a glorious sample of the translation of the saints before the coming of the Lord.

1. He announces the Lord's coming with His saints. That is not His parousia to take away His waiting bride, but His glorious epiphany when He will come back with His saints, and judge the wicked world, and set up His millennial throne.

2. He announces the judgment which the Lord is to execute upon the ungodly. There are some striking expressions here. Not only is He to judge the wicked, but He is to convince and convict them of their wickedness, so

that there shall be no answering back in that day, but every conscience shall admit its guilt, "that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." This judgment is not for the saints, but for the wicked world. Thank God, we are saved from that by our glorious Substitute, who bore our judgment on the cross of Calvary. The coming of the Lord is here recognized in its relationship to the wicked. The saints are only seen as assessors with the Judge, and sharers in His glory and His dignity.

IV. But now Jude turns from this painful picture of wickedness, and addresses to the saints one of the sweetest and loftiest messages in all this volume of inspiration. "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

1. He bids them build themselves upon their most holy faith. The same word "faith" which we notice in the beginning of the epistle is fundamental in Christian life and character as here portrayed. It is a process of building, but faith is the foundation of all. It is the same thought which Peter expresses in his second epistle: "Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity" (2 Peter 1:5-7). Christian life grows, not by adding one grace to another in our human character building, but by taking every grace directly from Jesus Christ Himself, and making each addition to the building on act of simple faith. We become complete in

holiness simply by appropriating the life of Jesus, moment by moment, until He has become incarnate in all our actions and relationships.

2. "Praying in the Holy Ghost." This is the process by which our life is built up. It is a continual communion in the Spirit, a breathing out of self, a breathing in of Christ; and just as the human body grows by the exhaling of our exhausted breath and the inhaling of fresh life moment by moment, so the secret process of the soul's growth is a ceaseless fellowship with God in the Holy Ghost. Each moment brings some new need, and that need is transformed into a prayer, and that prayer into a grace, and that grace into an added element in our Christian character and life. There is not a moment in our conscious existence that we may not be thus occupied in communion, and there is not a thing that comes to us that should not be made an occasion for this unceasing habit of prayer.

3. "Keep yourselves in the love of God." Here we have the element in which we grow. It is a glorious tropical climate of divine love. It is ever warmed by the sunshine of His heart and illumined by the radiance of His smile. It does not mean our love to God, but it means our constant consciousness and recognition of His love to us. It is the same thought which the Lord Jesus expressed in the fifteenth chapter of John: "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye [or, live ye] in my love."

4. The last step in this beautiful ascent is hope. "Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." That means looking for the coming of our Lord

and for the glory that is to be brought unto us at His appearing. It is the uplook of a spirit that is ever gazing sunward, heavenward. How beautifully Dr. Bonar has expressed it:

"My hopes are passing onward, upward,
And with my hopes my heart has gone;
My eyes are turning skyward,—sunward,
Where glory brightens 'round yon throne."

V. For a moment Jude turns his thought toward the sinner, and he gives two very practical directions for service and soul-winning. "And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh."

First, we are to save people by compassion. We must love souls if we would win them. And surely, if we realize their danger and their need, we shall understand the compassion of which the apostle speaks. We are to have great tenderness, gentleness, and love, or we shall be little used in bringing men to God.

But there are others with whom we must take a different course, and sometimes the sternest measure is the kindest. It is said that Mr. Moody was once talking with an inquirer who tried him with his indifference. Mr. Moody broke away from him, saying, "I guess God can get along without you, if you can get along without Him." And for the remaining meeting Mr. Moody paid no attention to the man. First, the man's pride was wounded, but soon his conscience was aroused, and before the meeting was over, he himself came imploring the prayers of the evangelist. Sometimes we must use messages as severe as

Jude's strong language expresses, "pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh," and, making no compromise with sin or cowardice, press the soul right through to the most real and complete confession and renunciation of all sin as the only condition of the mercy and peace of God.

VI. Finally, Jude closes with this beautiful doxology: "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God and Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

1. He speaks of "him that is able to keep you from falling." This is an inadequate translation. Literally it means from "stumbling." He is not only able to keep us from the great falls, but from the slightest missteps. Oh, let us claim this great and wonderful grace.

2. He is "able . . . to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." This is His purpose. For this end He is taking us through all processes of His grace and all the discipline of His love. Some day we shall understand and thank Him for it all. Some day we shall shine forth in the kingdom of our Father even as He, "faultless" or "without blemish," which the original word literally means.

3. He is here described as "the only wise God our Saviour." This is a glorious name, and it is given to Jesus, the Son of man, our blessed Saviour. Let us adore His glorious majesty as well as love His wondrous grace.

4. To Him "be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

